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THE CASTE SYSTEM

NAVAHIND

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[Note : Appendix numbers III and V to VIII are translations from Hindi.]

THE TWO SEGREGATIONS OF CASTE AND SEX

The Indian people are the saddest on earth. They are so because they are also the poorest and the most diseased. Another equally important reason, however, consists in the peculiar bend their spirit has received, particularly during their recent history. They profess a philosophy of non-attachment, immaculate in its reasoning and more so in its insight, but practise the coarsest kind of attachment. They so cling to life that they prefer to live it on the lowest levels of misery rather than risk it in some great effort, and of greed of money and power, no people on earth gives a greater exhibition.

I am convinced that two segregations of caste and woman are primarily responsible for this decline of the spirit. These segregations have enough power to kill all capacity for adventure and joy.

All those who think that, with the removal of poverty through a modern economy, these segregations will automatically disappear make a big mistake. Poverty and these two segregations thrive on earth other's worms.

All war on poverty is a sham, unless it is, at the same time, a conscious and sustained war on these two segregations.

The President of the Indian Republic publicly bathed the feet of two hundred Brahmins in the holy city of Banaras. To bathe another's feet publicly is vulgar, to restrict this vulgar privilege to the caste of Brahmins should be a punishable offence, to include among this privileged caste a majority of no learning nor character is complete loss of discrimination, an inevitable accompaniment of the caste system and lunacy.

That the president could have indulged in this vulgar display is a merciless indictment of people like me who can only chafe and fume in impotent wrath.

I will not highlight the two accomplices in this crime, who adorn places of power in Uttar Pradesh. One of them is childishly anxious to have Banaras recognise him as a Brahmin and the other has probably admitted defeat and is now confusing the lowest depths of Hinduism for its sublime peaks of contemplation and culture.

Banaras has, in recent years, bred a vice, which strives to accord other groups of the twice-born the status of the Brahmin, which derides the 'Brahmin by birth' for the advantage of what it has chosen to call the 'Brahmin by deed.' The addicts of this vice have a funny complex towards Brahmins, whom they either insult or worship. Such Banias and Kayasthas are totally unable to have a normal human relationship of equality with those who are born Brahmins.

I must record that I got the full story of this evil act from a Brahmin. He had been included among the two hundred. He was the only one to have shrunk away in horror at the minute, before he could become guilty of this fell act of having his feet bathed by the president of his Republic. His place was rapidly filled up by a substitute.

But I shall ever cherish this poor teacher of Sanskrit, the only man in this ghastly devils' play. It is only such men and women, who, although they are born as Brahmins, are preventing the engulfment of the whole country by the perverted anti-Brahminism of the south.

I warn such Brahmins of Banaras and elsewhere as are gloating over this debasement of the human spirit and of the Indian Republic. Evil acts and pleasure in them recoil.

To bathe another's feet on the ground that he is a Brahmin is to guarantee the continuance of the caste system, of poverty

and sadness. From this to Nepal Baba and a pledged vote under the spell of Ganga water is a chain.

The spirit, of which such evil acts are born, can never plan the country's welfare nor adventure with joy. It will ever keep the vast millions lowly and submerged. It will deny them social and economic equality, just as much as it denies them spiritual equality.

It cannot improve the country's agriculture or industry, for it is the kin of the dungheap and the cesspool, which breed bugs and mosquitoes, although it may well use the D.D.T. around the precincts of the highcaste rich. Bugs, mosquitoes, famine and public bathing of Brahmins' feet sustain one another. They also sustain an incest of the mind, an inbreeding in the realm of ideas, for the adventure of conversation among minds, engaged in varying occupations and born in different strata, dies out.

A black sadness prevails, for there is no novelty, no possibility of free conversation between the priestess and the shoemaker, the teacher and the laundress in a land, whose president bathes Brahmins' feet.

One may disagree with one's president or consider his ways queer, but one would like to respect him. To deserve such respect, the president must not violate the elementary rules of civil conduct.

I had once before had occasion to write an unpublished comment on the president's view of social relations between man and woman, but he had not then completely lost my respect. He has done so now with this irrevocable act of brother killing brother, for the hands that publicly wash Brahmins' feet belong to legs that may kick the Sudra and the Harijan.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad may not worry yet whether he had the respect of my likes, for, if socialism and even democracy were not as impotent as they are today in India, the youth of Banares would have been hurt to the core of its being and would have

demonstrated in such mass as to make the display of this vulgarity impossible.

There must be yet some means to bring to the president and his U.P. accomplices the enormity of their offence. For the moment, I must repeat that he has lost my respect and of many millions like me.

I will not accuse the prime minister and his government of weakness in permitting the president of the Republic to so debase himself publicly. My charge against him is profounder. The man, who can cleverly cover up his traces on this issue of the caste system, is by far the more mischievous.

Pandit Nehru is on record for having extolled what he chose to call the "Brahminic spirit of service." What Dr. Rajendra Prasad seeks to do by commission, Pandit Nehru achieves by omission.

Aside from general and airy fulminations against the caste system, it would be interesting to know what the prime minister has done to smash caste and to encourage fellowship among all.

One may apply a very small test. On the day that marriage between Sudra and Dvija is designated as a qualification, among others, for recruitment to the administration and the armed forces and refusal to interdine as a positive disqualification, the war on caste will begin in earnest. That day is yet to dawn.

I must make quite clear that marriage between Sudra and Dvija is not to be mixed up with marriages between Bania and Brahmin and so forth for they are fairly easy and within the fold.

A false cry of holy horror at such infringement of civil rights may be expected, as if civil rights are not infringed by this fell custom of restricting a human choice to hereditary groups. One may also expect derision at such a qualification of inter-marriage for government service. Every state has the right to strive for its security and cohesion and the dispelling of that black sadness from which all novelty has fled.

That has already brought me on to the segregation of woman from man. These two segregations of caste and sex are interrelated and sustain each other. All spark goes out of conversation and life and vital juices do not flow freely.

I was part of a coffee-house group of talkers one day, when someone suggested that it was such coffee-talk that bred the French revolution. I boiled with rage. There was not one Sudra among us. There was not one woman among us. A dull, effete and insipid lot we were, cattle ever cudding yesterday's feed.

All politics in the country, Congress, Communist or Socialist, has one big area of national agreement, whether by design or through custom, and that is to keep down and disenfranchise the Sudra and the woman who constitute over three-fourths of our entire population.

The woman's problem is undoubtedly difficult. Her slavery to the kitchen is an abomination, and the stove that smokes horribly. She must be given a reasonable time-table for food and also a chimney that spirals the smoke away. She must indeed take part in the agitations against under-feeding and unemployment. But her problem also reaches beyond that.

Mrs. Shakuntala Srivastava has been writing a series of charming articles on the position of Indian women and I am glad to note that she has overcome the usual feminist passion of piling it on men and is now willing to recognise that both men and women are guilty in varying measure. But she will have to travel further.

I remember the day when the platform wished to have her at an important conference and she refused to move from the gallery, but I knew her remedy. I had only to threaten to hold her by the arm and she moved docilely from the gallery to the platform.

The issue of what is virtue and what is sin can no longer be shirked. I believe that spirituality is absolute but morality is

relative, and each age and even individual must discover a specific morality.

Of two women, one who has given birth to just one child in all her life, although an illegitimate one, and another who has produced half a dozen legitimate brats and more, who is the more decent and the more moral? Of two persons, a woman who is thrice divorced and has married a fourth time, and a man who marries a fourth time because his earlier wives have died one after another, who is the more decent and the more moral?

I do not deny that divorces and illegitimacy and the like are somewhat of a failure and monogamous but spontaneous loyalty is probably the standard to attain in man-woman relationships. But the standard is often missed in this as in other human spheres, when man or woman strives for perfection.

What then? I have no doubt that just one illegitimate child is heaps more decent than half a dozen legitimate brats. There is equally no doubt that the death of three wives or husbands cannot all be due to accident, and an amount of neglect and penury must have obtained and such neglect is lot more indecent than the frictions which may have occasioned three or more separations.

These judgments are no longer of marginal value. They have acquired a universal significance because conditions relating to marriage and after are today sinful, if anything can be called a sin. A girl without a dowry is a person of no consequence, like a cow without her calf.

Parents have told me with tear-sodden eyes how their daughters are maltreated and sometime put to death if there is difficulty in paying out the arranged dowry in full. Just as there are agricultural situations in which a person earns more by leasing than by labouring, a less educated girl is superior to a better educated one, for her dowry is smaller.

India is perverted to day; with all their talk of sex purity, the people are by and large dirty in their ideas of marriage and sex.

The giving and taking of dowry must, of course, be penalised, but a change has also to take place in the mind and its values. To arrange marriages on the sight of a photograph or in the nervous atmosphere of a cup of tea brought by a shrinking phantom is any day more ridiculous than the earlier marriages through the barber or the Brahmin. It is like buying a horse who is indeed brought before the buyer, but whose hoofs one may not touch nor closely examine the teeth.

There is no half way house. India will have to recover her ancient virility, which is another way of saying that she must become modern.

It is no responsibility of a parent to marry his or her daughter; the responsibility ends at providing a good education and good health. If a girl knocks around and elopes and mischances into illegitimacy, that is all part of the bargain to achieve normal relationships between man and woman and no stain at all.

But society is cruel. And women can be exceedingly cruel. It is annoying to see how married women behave and gossip about females, particularly if they are unmarried, who go about with different males. With such cruel minds, the segregation of man from woman will not end.

Sri Vinoba Bhave has been tempted to corrupt his estimable Bhoodan movement with unholy notions on birth-control and on the caste system or at least its surcharged allusions.

I believe that every couple who have produced three children should be sterilised and that facilities of sterilisation, or at least birth control, should be made available to every man or woman, married or unmarried, who does not wish to risk pregnancy.

Celibacy is generally a prison-house. Who has not met such imprisoned souls, whose virginity shackles them and who eagerly await a liberator?

Has not that imprisoned virgin, Mr. J. C. Kumarappa, given a public exhibition of his condition by praising Russian boys and girls for going about in separate packs, they were probably mass coquetting or mass courting without his knowledge, and has already expressed his yearning for a liberator of his soul?

It is time that young men and women revolted against such puerilities. They should ever remember that there are only two unpardonable crimes in the code of sexual conduct, rape and the telling of lies or breach of promise. There is also a third offence of causing pain or hurt to another, which they should avoid as far as possible.

How coarse life has become? Leaders of society are known to spend as much as fifty thousand rupees on the printing of wedding cards. The magnificence of their weddings consists not in the amities of soul, which the marrying couple may have been able to explore, but in necklaces which are priced at twenty lakhs and saris at fifty thousand and more.

I ran into one such multi-millionaire at a tea party, who had the added impertinence to tell me that such saris did not exist and I felt like sending him to the school of mink coats. Only once before years ago had I met this man, when he called on me and tried to flatter me for a whole two hours, for some naughty person had telephoned him to say that his factory would be blown up by my men for his wicked deals. He was coarse enough to suggest that he could be of some use to my Party and, as I was not coarse enough to accept his offer in ransom for his misdeeds, he has never again repeated his generous impulses.

It is at moments like these when one is temporarily blinded into the evil temptation for the bomb and the acid bulb.

Religion, politics, business and publicity are all conspiring to preserve the slime that goes by the name of culture. This conspiracy of the status-quo is terrific in its power to spell infamy and death. I am perfectly certain that I am in for a still more horrible retaliation for whatever I have written, not necessarily directly or immediately.

When young men and women suffer infamy for their honesty, let them remember that this is the price they have to pay for clearing away the slime so that the waters may flow freely again.

There is no greater virtue today than to smash these abominable segregations of caste and sex. Let them only remember not to cause hurt or pain or be coarse, for the relationship between man and woman is of delicate texture. They may not always be able to avoid it. But the striving should never cease. Above all, dispel this black sadness, and adventure into joy.

—1953, *January*.



CLASS ORGANIZATIONS: INSTRUMENTS TO ABOLISH CASTE

Back in 1949, I was seated with some young men in a Soho cafe in London. Not inclined to eat, I asked for tea. The waitress, a pretty young girl, asked which tea I required. I said 'English,' and to that she replied that she knew of just two types of tea, Chinese and Indian. Norman Hart, sensing humour in the situation, remarked that Indians too were British. The waitress at once replied that they were that till two years ago but were no longer so. Norman rejoined that the English had been such bad rulers to give India her freedom so early as to invite unrest and bloodshed and not to have trained the Indians till they had the ability to govern themselves. The waitress laughed uproariously and wanted Englishmen to spend their famed talents on the good governance of England. Evidently, the girl had a healthy mind in a healthy body. I asked her if she had been in any way connected with India, and she told me that her father-in-law had been in the Indian Civil Service. Of course, I knew that Europeans did not distinguish much between the collector of a district and a dish-washer, so far as social status was concerned. However, I was surprised, although I may not have betrayed it, to know that her father-in-law was once the chief secretary of the Madhya Pradesh government. Even socialists of India may find it hard to swallow the idea of the daughter-in-law of a chief secretary serving food in a restaurant. Men and women of this country, if they come from the higher castes, would prefer begging to manual work. The caste system and its attendant habits on the one hand and the great disparity in incomes on the other are responsible for the social stagnation in this country. Barren controversies bearing on theory and doctrines must now give way to concrete and purposive discussions in terms of

principles and their application to practice, in order to bring a freshness in thinking and purity in conduct.

In 1946, Nana Patil had come to our camp in connection with the Goa struggle and at night he addressed about eight to ten thousand people. He told them that his soul would find rest only when low-caste women would get a month's rest before and after child birth and high-caste women would wash their clothes. The applause was tremendous. In south India, this Brahmin and non-Brahmin controversy has assumed threatening proportions. I do not like the element of mutual enmity and hate in this dispute, and I told Nana Patil afterwards that, if he wanted to break the caste system, he would have to attain a new outlook based on social equality and desist from any attempt to replace the old with a new caste system with the roles of the castes reversed. Nana Patil vented his grief which, to a great extent, I understand and accept but I repeated my words again. I heard later that he kept his speeches balanced for six months but soon after relapsed into the old bitterness. Blame lies with both sides. After all, there shall be mistakes committed in this battle against caste and both sides will have to show understanding and sympathy.

About the same time, the Goa movement was dying out. After the arrest of about five hundred persons, no more were coming forward to court arrest. This was mainly due to the policy of the executive committee to keep its members out of prison on grounds of organizational need when others were being sent to prison. Such a policy does not work. The non-Brahmins in the Goa struggle told me that the movement had petered out because of the Brahmins and that the existing executive committee, comprising solely of Brahmins, would have to be substituted with one having a fair non-Brahmin representation. It took me two days to persuade the members of the committee to court arrest. But when I helped select a new committee, and I cannot be accused of any partiality in the matter, I found that nine out of the eleven members selected were still Brahmins. One can only wonder in utter helplessness at the enormity of the task of

breaking the bonds of caste. As a result of the ten thousand year old tradition of cultural supremacy, the twice-born have acquired learning, intelligence and initiative, and it is impossible to bring a new cultural life to the Sudras unless a certain descrimination is allowed in their favour.

Once, in the district of Ghazipur, during a meeting all eyes were turned towards the wife of Sri Sukhadeva, a depressed class peasant, as she came smartly dressed but a bit late to the meeting. Sukhadeva is an averagely well off farmer but is a Sudra and as such he and his relatives have often to face various injustices. Later I was told that, in a spell of frustration, Sukhadeva had been enticed by Congressmen to change over to the Congrss but his wife had plainly told him that, unless the Socialist Party played foul on him, he should not give up the Party he had accepted. Three years have passed since this happened but I am yet to know if Sukhadeva's wife has been given any executive position in the Mahila Panchayat or the Kisan Panchayat of Ghazipur or that a patient effort has been made to train her for any leading role. Likewise, in Kagodu in Mysore, I came across Kinchappa and Masti who, though illiterate, had more commonsense and courage than many others. I do not also know of any efforts made to educate these persons to prepare them to lead the Kisan Panchayat there. Until the effort to animate the souls of Sudras and Harijans and women is pursued with relentless zeal, there is no hope of nurturing a new life in the country. The 'Dvija' tradition must combine with the vitality of the 'Sudra.' The task is by no means easy but there is no other way out.

Some may think that the youth of the country at least is aware of pernicious effects of the caste system. I know of three or four areas in the country where young people hold the reins of Socialist leadership. These are people equipped with revolutionary outlook, competence to debate ideologies and boldness of initiative. These qualities are so much attached to the Dvija tradition that it is well nigh impossible for the Sudra to make a bid for them. Even in these areas, where leadership remained

with young Dvijas, politics could attain no new orientations. The reason is clear. Apart from the bitterest differences of ideology and programme, a curious but unique feature of all parties in the country, be they capitalist or socialist, is that the leadership is invariably held by the Dvijas. The gap between the hundred million Dvijas on the one side, and the two hundred million Sudras on the other is so wide that no political party has as yet undertaken to fill it up. Political life in India is not clean. Nepotism, jobbery, opportunism, flattery, non-adherence to truth and a tendency to twist doctrines to suit particular motives are some of the traits of Dvija leadership. These traits will remain with the Dvijas unless they make a conscious effort to bridge the gulf between themselves and the Sudras. The Sudras too has his shortcomings. He has an even narrower sectarian outlook. Once in office, the Sudra tries to perpetuate himself by having recourse to dirty sectarian methods. He cannot achieve a broadness of outlook. Inspite of all this, not only must the Sudras be now pushed to positions of power and leadership but sustained efforts should be made to enable them to imbibe a broad cultural outlook so that the stagnant waters of the country's social life may flow, and the Dvijas and Sudras both shed their weaknesses. It is futile to talk of revolutionary politics unaccompanied by efforts for social change. Only that political party has a future now in the country, which would make itself the spearhead of this social revolution and by its organization herald a new dawn.

At present, there are four other organizations with the Praja Socialist Party—the Kisan Panchayat, the Mazdoor Sabha, the Mahila Panchayat and the Samajavadi Yuvak Sabha, although many more functional organizations and co-operatives are needed. These organizations are lacking in initiative solely because their leadership is invariably tied up with those running the Party itself. If these organizations be live and broadbased, at least fifty to sixty people can be accomodated in executive posts in every village group, where they can pursue their initiative to do their mite for the country's good. I will take, for example, the Kisan Panchayat and enumerate the factors which chiefly account for

its inability to make any progress during the last three or four years:

1. The Kisan Panchayat while stressing its agitational aspects as a class organization completely ignored the constructive role it could play in finding ways and means for better yield by farmers. Together with Satyagraha, meetings and processions, equally important is the knowledge about seeds, sowing and reaping methods and marketing. It would be good if a monthly or fortnightly is brought out which may incorporate both these aspects.

2. Kisan Panchayats could not become nuclei of power. Right from village panchayat to parliament, representation for all elective posts continued to be decided by the Socialist Party and the easiest way to do so was naturally that the executive members of the Party should control the Kisan Panchayat also.

3. The delegates to annual conferences were almost never elected by the members. In all conferences, eighty per cent of the delegates were selected by executive committees. As a matter of fact, these conferences were all unconstitutional.

4. In all areas where the Kisan Panchayat had a leadership other than that of the Party, the gulf between the two widened mostly because of mutual distrust. Whenever resurgence comes to nation and various energies are released, a certain amount of tension is bound to develop. Even while belonging to the same party, persons working in different class organizations have their differences. That these differences should not degenerate into personal malice nor should get the better of us constitutes the prime essential of healthy political life. Disciplinary rules to check this tendency have already been framed.

5. The offices of the Kisan Panchayat has always looked towards the Party offices for their finance. No attempts have been made to collect money separately for the Kisan Panchayat.

6. The Kisan organizations, unlike those of labour, did not have the opportunity of representation at international gatherings.

7. The Kisan Panchayats could not succeed in getting tribunals set up to decide disputes of the peasants like those of labour.

8. The peasantry could not throw up a leadership from the village to the national level which could make them participants with others in the creating of the new civilization.

All these factors originate from the same malady. If the Kisan Panchayats work as appendages to the Party units with a common leadership, it is impossible for them to gather strength or to accentuate their class character by agitational as well as constructive means. If class and occupational organizations have to function effectively, the practice of crowding several executive positions on one individual must be ended. I might in this connection relate a bitter experience. The executive committee of the Panch Mahamandal was formed out of persons not holding any positions in other committees. But I could not then imagine, as it however happened later, that the Panch Mandal will be drowned in a flood of non-cooperation from the Party members in all districts. New persons placed in executive positions of these organizations can only be effective if they are assured of the cooperation of other members. It is difficult for a leader of any political party to maintain unimpaired or expand that strength which is solely drawn from the party itself. Abiding strength can only result from his capability to coordinate the energies released through various such organizations. It is doubtless that the Kisan Panchayats, Mahila Panchayats and the Yuvak Sabhas will prosper only when executive positions in these organizations will provide an opportunity to the awakened Sudra soul to find its expression. With the development and strengthening of such organizations, it is equally essential to invest small village and town units with more and more political power. If the sole aim of local leadership remains to strengthen one centralised power, besides the impossibility of attaining even this aim, there is no hope for ushering a new civilization. Village units, while maintaining a national unity, should be able to take their decisions about their problems.

People have been talking about the fourpillar state but how many of them have tried to understand all its implications is difficult to say. Are our leaders agreeable to make the collectors, the police and the revenue officers responsible to the village and district Panchayats and at the same time are the district or village leaders preparing themselves to shoulder these responsibilities effectively. There is no sense in talking about village and district government unless the real task of equipping oneself with complete knowledge of prevailing conditions and development possibilities of one's region and with the ability of administration is taken up.

The essential background for achieving all these tasks is however a strong and clear policy. Individual worship whether of Mr. Nehru yesterday or Mr. Vinoba today would lead nowhere. Every help is to be given to Sri Vinoba's work but it should not mean ignoring other tasks. Spade, jail, vote and organization are four methods and each one of them of equal importance. They are inter-related and in a big country like ours their use must needs be simultaneous.*

—1953, *January.*



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* *Translated from Hindi by Mr. Loknath Joshi.*

LETTER TO A SUDRA

I received your letter. Your anger is natural and I am in complete agreement with your conclusions but, at the same time, I would like an alteration in your arguments. You have written that the Socialist Party has not been able to throw up even one leader from among the Sudras, whom they could follow with confidence. While agreeing with the first part of this statement I would like to change the other. After all, why should a national leader have an influence limited to the Sudras just because he is one of them, and not command a following from the other sections? It has all along been a shortcoming of the old Socialist Party, as it is of the Praja Socialist Party now, that it could not produce a leader of national dimensions from amongst the Sudras. I do not perceive any attempts at it even now. It is certain that, without first tackling this problem, no reconstruction of the country is possible, not to say anything about the advent of socialism. But we should be clear about the sort of leaders we want. They should be able to command the respect of all and thus be truly national. It is essential for abolition of the caste system that such leaders should come from among the Sudras.

You have written about the difference in outlook of the Sudras and the Dvijas. So far it is true, but when you talk about organization on this basis, I would like to say that the correct way is to narrow down the difference and ultimately remove it. It is true that the Dvijas take up this battle against caste as a matter of duty while the Sudras consider it a fight for their rights. This is an ignorant attitude, for this is a battle of rights for the Dvijas too and, after all, there is not in the long run, much to distinguish rights from duties. By preserving this national caste system and the vast multitude of Sudras in the country, the Dvijas have made

themselves the Sudras of the international caste system. There are only four big countries in the world, all white, who enjoy a privileged position in the United Nations Organization. They are the Dvijas of the international caste system and all other peoples, including India with all its Dvijas, are the Sudras of this system. The day Dvijas come to realise this, they shall view the abolition of caste with a different outlook. It is as much your task as mine to bring them to this stand-point. When Dvijas and Sudras line up together with the common objective of smashing the international caste system, all-round progress is bound to result.

I can well understand your feeling of kinship with the Shoshit Sangh or the Shetgari Kamgar Sangh, but what is it worth. You have yourself said that they are loose unprincipled organizations. So far as the Praja Socialist Party is concerned, there is no doubt that, with a change in outlook and behaviour, you would be able to feel the same kinship there too. But to bring about this change, the Dvijas and Sudras are charged with responsibility in equal measure. In this connection, I would like to put some facts before you.

Firstly, the distinction between the educated and the illiterate which is commonly recognised in our country has a similar motivation as the distinction of castes.

A great weakness of Indian politics is that almost all its leaders, no matter to which party they belong, are university trained. Out of the twenty-five members of the national executive of the Praja Socialist Party, there are hardly one or two who do not carry the polish of college education. This is not to say that education is a disqualification, nor that illiteracy is an asset. But I am sure that it is impossible to impact vigour to the country's politics, unless the uneducated are given a proper place in the leadership. You might have noticed that at times there is not much difference between the educated and the uneducated. This educated class with superior airs of learning but without its substance is a continual nuisance. There is a danger of such

half-educated multiplying themselves amongst the Sudras even more than among the Dvijas. When I speak of leaders arising out of Sudras, I do not mean that they should necessarily be educated. The real criterion is that they should have courage, honesty and a grasp of fundamentals. Such men should be picked up from wherever they are found.

The other point is that, with a little prosperity, the Sudras are inclined to pick up the bad habits of the Dvijas. No sooner does a Sudra acquires a little wealth, than he tries to force his woman behind the purdah. I have always maintained that the Sudra women, who work in the streets and the fields with uncovered faces, are far better than the Dvija women, who keep themselves shut up in homes. The Sudra should give this matter serious thought. The case of the Harijans is not so bad, but the backward castes who are not untouchables are gripped by such notions. The educated and well-to-do amongst the Sudras are more often motivated by a sense of jealousy and the social atmosphere is such as aggravates this feeling. Some of the leaders take advantage of such a state of affairs in furthering their own political and personal ends. At least in Uttar Pradesh, the Shoshit Sangh exists as a mere political instrument of Congress policy. It is certain that this dual role of external independence and opposition and internal cooperation will result in fatal consequences to the Sudras as well as the Dvijas. But the Congress is scarcely concerned with it. If that brings victory today, the long-range effects do not matter to it. In the same way, the Shetagari Kamgar Sabha is being used by Communists as a front to attract the Sudras to its fold. A man like Nana Patil could well become an all-Indian figure but for the existing society and the Dvijas to a large extent. Additionally, I want that Sudra leaders should give thought to their own shortcomings also. I do not know Sri Ambedkar or Sri More personally, but it is indeed painful to see such persons unable to rise above sectarian levels.

You are quite right in saying that socialism would be a hypocrisy so long as the Dvijas of the Praja Socialist Party retain their

indifference towards this problem. I have often tried to find out the reason for it. Let us take for example this latest incident when the president of India publicly washed the feet of Brahmins. No one except me deplored his action. It is possible that this may have been due to indifference. Many Socialists honestly but wrongly think that it is sufficient to strive for economic equality and caste inequality will vanish of itself as a consequence. They fail to comprehend economic inequality and caste inequality as twin demons, which have both to be killed. It may be that this hesitation to challenge openly the caste system may partly be due to fear of losing popularity. I visualise a third reason as well. Even while belonging to widely different parties, the Dvijas are bound by an unconscious link inspite of mutual strife. A common social sphere and ties of marriage and friendship keep them together.

When I speak about the uplift of the Sudras, you should not take it as a duty for the Dvijas and not their self-interest. I have often felt that, unlike the Dvija women, the Sudra women have an immense aptitude and love for a free atmosphere and innocent pleasure. If the barriers of caste are broken or even loosened, many Dvija young men would be attracted to Sudra women, and bring happiness to themselves and the country. In a like manner, Sudra boys would also be able freely to enter the world of Dvija women. It is now essential that the Dvijas and the Sudras must not only understand to define caste as comprising of those capable of producing children of one another, but grasp the definition instinctively. Sudras and Dvijas are capable of producing children of one another. In this connection, it is also to be remembered that generally a backward caste person would like to have connections and equality with the twice-born as against the depressed castes. This mentality is poisonous. We must now contribute to the simple mentality of a common caste of mankind. When you own this mentality, you would not say that only a Sudra can help the Sudras to rise. The Sudras and the Dvijas are both lying half dead. The Sudras should awaken the Dvijas and the Dvijas should awaken the Sudras. It may

be that the application of this principle to action will be attended by a thousand difficulties but there is no other way.*

—1953, *March*.

* *This letter in Hindi was written in reply to a letter from Sri Nandakishore Nai of Delhi, and translated by Mr. Loknath Joshi.*

ADIVASI AND THE NON-ADIVASI

The Adivasi *problem* is *both economic* and *cultural*. An unhelmed cultural interchange between the Adivasi and the non-Adivasi is necessary. The sense of cultural superiority among the plain-dwellers and the effort of some Adivasi leaders to set up iron and bamboo curtains is condemnable. All India is poor but the Adivasi inspite of his poverty has known how to preserve his spontaneous gaiety in mirth and in dance. From these forest and hill dwellers, the rest of India must learn the culture of gaiety, and to them it must carry some devices of agriculture and industry. All India must remember that the blood in its veins is in substantial part Adivasi, although the comingle of this blood may have taken place several thousand years ago. A new comingle is inevitable.

—1954, *January*.

MY BARBER

My barber told me today that his daily earnings average Rs. 4 and that he had to pay a rent of Rs. 50 per month for his hair-cutting shop. The government was also trying to charge him a profession tax annually of a like amount with the monthly rent on his shop. The Union of Owners of Hair Cutting Saloons, whose office-bearers have now turned independent, is trying to combat this profession tax of more than Rs. 4 a month on a person whose earnings would average Rs. 2 or 3 a day. Even assuming that the barber had not correctly assessed his daily earnings, and that he actually made Rs. 5 a day, which brought him a gross trade of Rs. 150 a month, the rent of Rs. 50 a month on his shop measuring 14 ft. by 12 ft. seems a great cruelty, and likewise the tax on profession. I asked him why he was not seeking redress under the Rent Control Act, and he replied most casually that officers and judges generally decide in favour of their own class, and that poor people like him had very little chance and he may well have to vacate his shop as a result of any legal proceedings. This barber has a mother and a wife and 3 children, and these six persons have to live on Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a day. For the whole day to-day I have been trying to unburden myself of this information. Knowing full well the usual fate of my speeches and interviews, which are either not reported at all or distorted, I have sought this mode of drawing attention to the twin cruelties of rack-renting and oppressive taxation.

Large sections of the Indian population are similarly oppressed. A long culture, or else continued exploitation, or both have reconciled them to their condition. Otherwise, they would have risen in bitter rebellion. They have few supports, or helpers. Their stories do not make the grand news of the day. Their

struggles would have to be preceded by a long, dull and arduous activity of organization and house to house or shop to shop campaigning. Their problems raise the ticklish question of relationships between one section of the population and another, when neither is big business or big bureaucracy, and the just sharing between them of the national dividend. All political parties have been shying away from these problems, either because these are not capable of an early or grand finale, or because they make the disturbing demand that one shall choose one's side in disputes that divide one's local community. It is easy to choose one's side in the grand disputes. Local disputes are however the main field on which life and its bitter injustices are daily enacted.

I do not know whether my party, the Socialist Party, would be able to get out of the traditional rut of what might be called "grand politics." I should like to say a word to the new recruit, to the mass of Socialist ranks whose idealism may not yet have found its rigid moulds or been over-powered by inertia or cynicism. Where the national larder is most pitifully limited, the fight of each against all becomes most cruel. Everybody tries to scoop out of it his utmost. The inequalities of exploitation are grossest in those lands where poverty is great. Against exploitation by big capital there is at least clamour though not much action. But there is little clamour or organization against the massive exploitation in local communities, against oppressive tyrannies of a local order arising out of mutual relationships *among* the local *powerful* and the locally depressed. Such relationship as exists between the rack-renter and the shop-keeper, the money-lender and the artisan, the land-owner and the agricultural labourer, the consumers and the government together with the stockists, the police and the people must be fully and publicly exposed. Organizations must be formed and campaigns conducted with a view to reforming these relationships. More often than not, the exploiter and exploited in such relationships constitute the depressed part of humanity; they are both poor in the background of international or Eruro-

American living standards. Some have mistakenly thought that they should not raise local disputes for fear that these might divide the masses. The way to raise these vast masses consisting also of the petty exploiters to decent living standard is to bring local relationhips into the open and to campaign and organise vigorously against local tyrannies and exploitations.

—1956, *May* 31; *Hyderabad; This was written as a 'letter to editor.'*

ENDURE TEMPORARY INJUSTICE

Socialism is a doctrine of equality. Unless we are careful, it may deteriorate into a doctrine of inequality. If merit were to be the sole criterion for election or appointments, the high castes with their 5,000 years old traditions of specialization in mental pursuits would be unbeatable. They would continue to be at the top in a socialist society as they have been in previous societies.

The Dvija must be prepared to endure a temporary injustice so that the wrongs of several thousand years may be righted and a new era of justice and equality may begin. The proudest day for the Brahmin and the Bania would be when they end their supremacy. But there had also to be an awareness of the failings of the backward classes, particularly their tendency to ape the bad habits and manners of the high castes as soon as they become prosperous or powerful. Moreover, anger against the caste system and the systematic effort to destroy it should never be allowed to degenerate into bitterness against the high castes. Such bitterness would permanently enthrone mediocrity. The Sudras should not forget that the overwhelming majority of Dvijas are poor and dispossessed. The miracle of the caste system has, however, converted these 8 crores and more of dispossessed humanity into upholders of the status quo. They are beggars of body, but believe themselves to be masters of the mind.

—1956, *May; Rai Bareilly; speech summary; Backward castes federation conference.*



HARIJAN TEMPLE ENTRY

I recommend to the Harijan Temple Entry Committee of Banaras to suspend its civil resistance until the 30th of September. This is from the view both to give the government an opportunity for a calmer consideration and to enable people's forces to organise themselves properly in order to give a serious fight if that becomes necessary. The resistance in Banaras has recently been showing signs of degenaration. Scuffles and beatings in front of Vishvanath temple have become an attendent feature of every attempt at Harijan entry into the temple. A man of the significance of Raj Narain Singh was recently dragged by his beard.

Governmental behaviour has so 'far deteriorated that a number of persons on the peoples, side were seriously contemplating to resort to hunger-strikes and fasts of various durations. I tried to persuade Raj Narain Singh and others that a hunger-strike for any public reason, and which is publicly undertaken outside the prison breeds hypocrisy, untruth and individualism, and, even when Gandhiji was alive, I had tried to reason with him that hunger-strikes and fasts were a most fraudulent weapon. Every public hunger-striker or faster is fraud until he dies as a result of his abstention from food. Raj Narain Singh was not fully persuaded but he has agreed to accept this judgement at least for the time being. But that puts us on our tests. Those who would want public hunger-strikes abolished because of their fraud and individualism must necessarily advise and practice collectivist forms of struggle. It is not enough to condemn hunger-strikes. We must also practice more social forms of struggle.

We are, therefore, contemplating the convening of an All-India conference on the 1st October in the city of Banaras for

the purpose of having the Vishvanath temple thrown open to Harijans. Delagates to this conference would naturally have to be ready, in the event of failure of reason, to throw a peaceful ring around the Vishvanath temple either on the same day or the following. The procedure will be simple. If the Harijans are denied entry into the temple, so must everybody. I hope the Harijan Temple Entry Committee of Banaras would accept my recommendation. The national committee of the Socialist Party will also be approached to permit Socialists to take part in this action. If it does not meet early, its office bearers are authorised to act on its behalf. The parliament must also assert itself. Rarely has a parliament been knocked in the Banaras fashion. The sovereignty of the parliament is in question. The Untouchability Prevention Act prohibits all courts from issuing any kind of injunctions, temporary or otherwise, or decrees that stall Harijan entry into temples. This law may not be legally valid, but the government should deem it to be such until it is declared illegal by the High or Supreme Court. That the Uttar Pradesh government has not been acting in accordance with the law passed by the government is as much an insult to the sovereignty of the Indian people as it is a comment on its own crude vulgarity.

—1956, *August* 8.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH DR. AMBEDKAR

Hyderabad, 10th December 1955

Dear Dr. Ambedkar,

The enclosed folders are self-explanatory. "Mankind" would try earnestly to reveal the caste problem in its entirety. It would therefore be very happy to have an article from you. It expects its articles to range between 2,500 and 4,000 words. You are of course free to select your own subject. Should you select one or the other aspect of the caste system prevalent in our country, I would want you to write something which makes the people of India sit up, not alone in anger, but also in wonderment. I do not know whether the speeches I made about you during the parliamentary campaign in Madhya Pradesh were communicated to you by your Lieutenant who also travelled with me. Even now I very much wish that sympathy should be joined to anger and that you became a leader not alone of the scheduled castes, but also of the Indian people.

The Zonal Study Camp would be very glad to have you in its midst. The accompanying list of subjects is meant to help. If you could give us a resume of your lecture in advance it would be good for purposes of publication afterwards. We expect that a lecture lasting an hour would be followed up by a discussion of similar duration.

I do not know whether the foundation conference of the Socialist Party would have any interest for you. Although you are not a member of the Party, the conference would want to have you as a special invitee. The conference will take up, among other subjects, problems relating to agricultural labour,

artisans, women and parliamentary work, on any one of which you have something significant to say. If you feel like participating in the proceedings of the conference in order to bring out one or another point, I trust that the conference will extend you special permission to do so.

With warm greetings,

Yours sincerely,
Rammanohar Lohia

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MESSRS MEHROTRA AND GOSWAMI'S LETTER

I

My dear Doctor saheb, 27-9-'56.

Through a friend of ours, we were invited to visit Delhi and meet Dr. Ambedkar. The friend is Dr. Ambedkar's most trusted man. We went to Delhi to meet him, and had a 75 minute talk with him. It was made clear we came purely in a personal capacity.

Dr. Ambedkar would very much like to meet you whenever you are in Delhi. He is an old man and not well. He walked with support.

He wants a copy of all Party literature and all copies of "Mankind." He will pay for it (including constitution, policy and programme).

He agreed with our view that Mr. Nehru is trying to wreck every party, and that opposition should be strong.

He was in favour of a new political party with strong roots.

He did not understand communism or socialism of the Marxist variety as of any good to India, but when we explained our stand, he was interested.

We invited him to seek election from Kanpur city general constituency to parliament; he did not dislike the idea, but said that he wanted to talk to you with an all-India perspective, and we made it clear that we can have no alliances, as per our policy. He, it seems, is not enamoured of his Scheduled Castes Federation. The executive is meeting in Delhi on 30th. He was very interested in the facts about Mr. Nehru (cinema outfit, state belongs to leader etc. from Mankind) and said that adequate publicity be given to these facts. He was interested in taking out an English daily from Delhi.

He was very sympathetic, cordial and eager to understand our viewpoint in detail. He explained the democratic practice in England, at some length, of choosng a candidate, and it seems is a very great believer in democracy.

This is the gist. We could not report in person because we did not know where you were and we had no money. Our trunk call to Hyderabad on 23-9-56 to Party office resulted in "no reply," as nobody picked up the phone on that side.

Dr. Ambedkar's Address : 26, Alipore Road, New Delhi.

Yours sincerely,

Vimal Mehrotra

D. V. Goswamy

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II

DR. AMBEDKAR'S LETTER

ALL INDIA SCHEDULED CASTES FEDERATION

26, Alipur Road, Civil Lines, Delhi,
24th September 1956.

Dear Dr. Lohia,

Your two friends had come to see me and I had quite a long talk with them although we did not enter into any discussion about your election programme.

The working committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation is meeting on 30th September 1956 and I shall put to the committee the proposal which your friends have left with me. After the working committee meeting is over I should like to have a discussion with the important members of your Party so that we can finally settle as to what we can do in coming together. I would therefore be glad if you can be in Delhi on Tuesday, the 2nd October 1956 at my place. If you are coming please let me know by wire so that I can detain some people of the working committee also to meet you.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
B. R. Ambedkar

III

LETTER TO DR. AMBEDKAR

Hyderabad, 1st October 1956.

Dear Dr. Ambedkar,

I thank you for your kind letter of 24th September. I read it today after my return to Hyderabad and am therefore wholly unable to reach Delhi in time for the meeting that you have suggested. I would, however, welcome an opportunity to meet you as early as possible. I would be in the Uttar Pradesh round the middle of October so that I could see you in Delhi on the 19th or 20th of October. In case you are in Bombay on the 29th of October, I could meet you there. Please let me know by wire which of the two dates would suit you.

I was concerned to know about your health from other friends. I hope you are taking all necessary care.

I am also having the three numbers of 'Mankind' issued so far sent to you under separate cover. I had half a mind to suggest a subject for you. But I desist from doing so. The

three issues of 'Mankind' will themselves impel you to the subject of your choice. I only wish to emphasise the utter intellectual collapse that has overtaken our country. I hope only temporarily, and how necessary it is for a man like you to speak unreservedly.

Yours sincerely,
Rammanohar Lohia

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IV

LETTER TO MESSRS MEHROTRA & GOSWAMY

Hyderabad, 1st October 1956

Dear Vimal and Dharmavir,

I have your letter. I would want you to pursue your talk with Dr. Ambedkar, but remember that you are not to depart from the lines you have yourself indicated in your letter to me.

With Dr. Ambedkar, the greatest difficultty has always been his ideological affiliation with the Atlantic camp. I do not think that this affiliation is anything except ideological. But we have to be very careful about it. I wish that Dr. Ambedkar became attuned with the position of the camp of equal-irrellevence. You might continue a little ideological discussion with him through your common friends.

I am having a copy of my letter to Dr. Ambedkar sent to you. In case he wants me to meet him in Delhi, you may also be there. My meeting with Dr. Ambedkar will be as much a tribute to the fact that the backward and the scheduled castes can produce an intellect like him as for its political consequences.

Yours sincerely,
Rammanohar Lohia

V

DR. AMBEDKAR'S LETTER

Delhi, 5th October 1956.

Dear Dr. Lohia,

I am in receipt of your letter No. 8821 of 1st October 1956. If you wish to meet me on the 20th of October I shall be in Delhi and you are welcome. You have only to telephone me to fix the time.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
B. R. Ambedkar.

VI

MR. MEHROTRA'S LETTER TO DR. AMBEDKAR

Kanpur, 15th October 1956.

Respected Doctor saheb,

My friend Mr. D. V. Goswamy and I met you in Delhi last month, and subsequently we communicated our conrversation to Dr. Lohia.

I have been studying with keenest interest the decisions taken by the executive committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation. Three points emerge of special interest to the people of the country.

(a) Your committee has felt the need of a new party to be named as Republican Party of India. We do not as yet know the

policy and programme of the new party or its ideology, and it is not possible for the people as yet to form any opinion about it, though the country is looking forward eagerly to the views of a man of your intellectual stature on the remedy for the present ills of ours. It may be out of place for men like me to venture to give advice to you but the country would have very much liked that you had gone through the policy and programmes of various political parties already existing in the country, and given your observations on the professions and practice of these political parties.

(b) You must forgive me if I frankly admit that I have not been able to understand the policy of your committee on the question of election alliances. I am totally confused. The spokesman of the parliamentary board of U.P.S.C.F. has said in a statement that S.C.F. does not desire any election alliance with any leftist party, while, if I understood correctly from news reports, your central committee favoured electoral adjustments, or some such similar alliance. The Socialist Party, of course, has in its policy laid down that we will not enter into any electoral alliance or adjustment, but will not contest elections except in those constituencies where its membership is at least one per cent of the total electorate and is spread over one-third of its polling stations. The Socialist Party does not believe that any other party is an opposition party, but the above decision has opened a way for automatic electoral adjustment with other allegedly opposition parties because by this we will be contesting in about 500 to 600 constituencies only and we will keep ourselves out of nearly 3,000 constituencies.

(c) The resolution adopted by your committee on the Suez may be based primarily in national interest, but I am extremely doubtful if in the long run, this will be really in the interest of the Indian people. This would mean that the foreign capital invested in India may not be nationalized without the consent of the countries whose nationals the foreign capitalists may be.

May I request you to very kindly ask the office of S.C.F. to send us a copy of those resolutions.

I understand that Dr. Lohia was to have met you, but I do not think that he will be able to meet you in the immediate future, but if you can spare your valuable time, I may come over and discuss matters with you.

I hope that your health will permit you to spare some time.

Yours sincerely,
Vimal Mehrotra.

CC : (1) Sri D. V. Goswamy, Civil Lines. Allahabad.
(2) Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, Hyderabad.
(3) G. N. Saxena, Socialist Party, 4, Pan Dariba Lucknow.

VII

LETTER TO MADHU LIMAYE

HYDERABAD, 1-7-1957.

Dear Madhu,

I have found the correspondence with and concerning Dr. Ambedkar and I am having it sent to you. You can well understand that my sorrow at Dr. Ambedkar's sudden death has been and is somewhat personal. It had always been my ambition to draw him into our fold, not only organizationally but also in full ideological sense, and that moment seemed to be approaching.

Of course, I would not like you even for a moment to read this correspondence with the back-ground of our common personal loss. Dr. Ambedkar was to me, a great man in Indian politics, and apart from Gandhiji, as great as the greatest of caste Hindus. This fact had always given me solace and confidence that the caste system of Hinduism could one day be destroyed.

I have always been trying to communicate to the Harijans of India, an idea which is basic with me. Dr. Ambedkar and Sri Jagjivan Ram are the two types of modern Harijans in India. Dr. Ambedkar was learned, a man of integrity, courage and independence; he could be shown to the outside world as a symbol of upright India. but he was bitter and exclusive. He refused to become a leader of non-Harijans. I can well understand the agony of the last 5,000 years to and their continuing impact on the Harijans. But that is precisely the point. Such a great Indian as Dr. Ambedkar, I had hoped, would some day be able to rise above the situation, but death came early. Mr. Jagjivan Ram maintains an apparent good will towards all Indians and Hindus and although he is known to flatter and kowtow to the caste Hindus when he deals with them, he is reported to sing to the bitter tunes of hatred in exclusively Harijan meetings. This is still no basis for the up-lift either of Harijans or of India. But Dr. Ambedkar's type also needs to be modified.

I do not know the men who now run the Scheduled Castes Federation. But I wish that the scheduled castes of India were persuaded to make a rational estimate of the last 40 years of Indian politics. I wish they continue to have the symbol of Dr. Ambedkar for homage and imitation, and Dr. Ambedkar with his independence but without his bitterness, a Dr. Ambedkar who would act so as to be a leader of all India and not Harijans only.

Yours affectionately,
Rammanohar Lohia



CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING BACKWARD CLASSES FEDERATION

I

LETTER FROM MR. R. L. CHANDAPURI

Patna, 15th June 1957.

Dear Dr. Lohia,

I am glad to inform you that just on the eve of the last general election, BCF was declared a political party. This was done on your advice to Mr. Keshari Singh, our special representative to the Socialist Party conference in Madhya Pradesh last year. The Indian National Backward Classes Federation was set up as a political party parallel to All India Backward Classes Federation, a social organization of which Dr. P. S. Deshmukh, Union minister for agriculture is the president. There was absolutely no time for us to prepare for the last general election. Any how, constitution and manifesto of the party was drafted and a few candidates were set up.

After the general election was over, we have had discussions among ourselves for the future work of the Party in Bihar. I have not discussed with the leaders of BCF in other states specially West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Delhi where our Party units have started functioning. I feel that there is great potentiality for BCF movement in India. But there is difficulty of finance and that is worrying me.

I find it a very difficult task to organise a political party of the backward classes in India when members of the backward

classes are there to sabotage it from Congress and other sides for their selfish ends.

When I read your books I find that my heart is nearer to you than any other leader of India. Please, let me know the date and place where I may meet you.

Yours Sincerely,
R. L. Chandapuri.

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II

LETTER FROM MR. R. L. CHANDAPURI

Patna, 30-8-1957.

My Dear Dr. Lohia,

I was very glad to meet you at Simultala and to have talk with you beginning from August 15 to August 19 on the varied problems facing the country and merger of the Indian National Backward Classes Federation with the Socialist Party of India. I shared the view of my colleagues when I told you at Simultala that the need of a separate political party of the Indian backward classes was there so long as 'caste-varna' complexion played a dominant role in moulding social and political life of an individual. I have no mental reservation when I say that other political parties of the country though they look outwardly to be possessing very attractive and progressive ideals and programmes but they are virtually paralysed in carrying out their programmes into action. I think that caste system is at the root of paralysis of Indian political parties which gives special meaning to political theories in India. Caste system is and had been in the past the real cause of disunity and disintegration of our national life and downfall of the country. Vivisection of our Motherland into Pakistan and Indian Union, demand for Achhutistan by Dr.

B. R. Ambedkar and murder of Mahatma Gandhi were the results of vicious circle created by counter revolutionary forces led by upper castes Hindu imperialism. Now Congress rule under Pt. Nehru's leadership is on its highest phase of development of Hindu imperialism. I say on my personal experience that barring Socialist Party every other political party specially in Bihar is under direct clutches of Congress rulers whose modus operendi is their respective caste. The Indian backward classes who form overwhelming majority of the population of India can never expect establishment of socialism by such political parties. Amidst confusion and turmoil of idealogies of various political parties, the Socialist Party of India by its policy and programmes from its very inception attracted the attention of every right thinking person in the country.

In the light of the talk which I had with you at Simultala and the opportunity which I got there to study camp life of the Socialist Party, I am convinced that the implementation of the policy and programmes of Socialist Party, in the present shape and form will surely land India in a new era of socialism and democracy.

I had agreed with you on the constitution, policy and programmes of Socialist Party and also on the proposal of merger. I liked some minor adjustment here and there in Executives of the Socialist Party about which you had no objection.

The final decision on the question of merger of our party will be taken by a convention of the Party which will be held some time in the month of October next. I assure you that I shall exercise my full influence in favour of the merger proposal. In the meantime I shall like to have still more clarification on the policy and programmes of the Socialist Party by you with special reference to the problems of backward classes.

Yours Sincerely,
R. L. Chandapuri.
President.
31-8-1957

III

LETTER FROM MR. KESHARI SINGH

Patna, 1-9-1957
Dear Sir,

It is just to inform you that a meeting of the working committee of Bihar State Backward Classes Federation has been called on September 15th to consider the proposal of merger of BCF. with the Socialist Party.

As informed, a letter by Mr. R. L. Chandapuri has been sent to you. If a reply to Mr. Chandapuri's letter reaches Patna before 15th of September, then we shall be able to place it before the working committee and which will be of great help to us.

Yours Sincerely,
Keshari Singh,
President, Bihar State B. C. Federation.

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IV

LETTER TO MR. R. L. CHANDAPURI

Hyderabad, 4th September 1957.

Dear Chandapuri,

I received your letter today and I am replying it today itself. I was happy to meet you both the times and likewise I am happy on reading your letter. Your opinion in regard to the Socialist Party is correct. To mend it wholly it is necessary that the backward classes join the Socialist Party in large numbers and not only make socialism as an ideal but as a voice of oppressed soul too. I am also fed up with Bania-Brahmin politics. It appears that this politics has resolved to finish every one who wants to raise all the 40 crores of India. I have no enmity with thread-

wearers. I want to raise them too. But I know that they can rise only when Sudra, Harijan, Women and Muslims also rise. This the thread-wearers do not understand. They think that if the backward class rises, they will degrade. This ignorance is the root of evil. I would want that your men too strengthen the Socialist Party with this idea. It is possible that some of them may be working with the idea of vengeance against and going ahead of the thread-wearers. This is neither proper nor possible. With this mentality only those amongst the Sudras will go ahead who are double faced, or can flatter, or who are possessed with the special ability of making use of hatred. We have to produce such men who are actually capable. Only then a politics will blossom through which nomenclatures such as Dvija and Sudra will be destroyed for ever.

What you have in regard to clarifications, much more than that is included in the principles and election manifesto of the Socialist Party. I am having them sent separately. You will observe in these that by abolition of tax on profitless agriculture backward classes stand to gain more. Similarly, all the people will benefit if the price policy is fixed in accordance with the principles laid down by the Socialist Party. To a certain extent there must be reservation in the services. But, for education scholarships should be given in larger number to backward classes. But there should be no such protection by which Dvija boys and girls are prevented from education. I think that the Dvijas, in special conditions, should not get government services. But in education full and equal opportunity should be given. Many Dvijas ask me in panic that then what is the use of educating them when they are asked to seek other ways than the government service. Likewise, when primary schools, where children of 5 to 10 years are educated, are made of one type, as required by the Socialist Party, then every child of Bhangi, Kurmi, Brahmin, Kisan and prime minister will get the same education. I believe that this is the first necessary reform for India without which nothing can be done. Limitation on land ownership, nationalization and the ratio of 1:10 of minimum and maximum income

and expenditure, all these aims in a way makes the Socialist Party a party of backward classes.

There will be an all India camp of the Socialist Party near Hyderabad. It will be nice if you could attend it as a special invitee. At the same time national committee will also meet. As you are not yet a member, therefore you yourself would not like to attend the meeting, but I hope that on an important occasion you will participate in a formal or informal meeting of the committee.

You have observed that I want such leaders from among the backward classes who are neither flatterers nor hatred mongers and who by taking a straight and self respecting course, become leaders of all India and all people of the country. Therefore, it is necessary that you do this work very early. Firstly do not be seated in Patna and, as far as possible, move about in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal in this month of September and clarify the ideas among the backward classes on a large scale and prepare their mind in accordance with your letter.

Yours sincerely,
Rammanohar Lohia.
C. C : Secretary, Socialist Party, Bihar, Patna.

Translated from the original in Hindi.

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V

LETTER FROM MR. R. L. CHANDAPURI

Patna, 9-9-1957.

Dear Doctor Saheb,

Received your letter on Saturday night. The letter confirmed the views and we were glad. Now there should not be any other political party of backward classes, of the oppressed and the exploited. I believe the Socialist Party alone should be their political party and all those who read your letter will think likewise.

I am sending a copy of your letter to other state committees. There should not be any delay in the merger, for which I am all the time working.

As you desire, I am reaching Hyderabad. It is possible that I may be delayed by a day or two but I will try to reach in time.

Here press representatives want to have copy of the correspondence. What is your opinion. Kindly reply.

I hope, you are keeping good health.

Yours,
Ramlakhan Chandapuri.

Translated from the original in Hindi.

VI

LETTER FROM MR. KESHARI SINGH

Patna, 11-9-1957.

Dear Sir,

I have just to inform you that the question of merger of BCF with the Socialist Party has created wide reaction not only in this state but in other states and in Delhi political circles also. Congressite leaders of backward classes are contemplating to re-organise their organization. Mr. Dhebar, Congress president is taking special interest on the problems of backward classes and Congress organization. In this connection I am sending press cuttings which will make the position clear to you.

With regards,
Yours sincerely,
Keshari Singh,
President, Bihar State Backward Classes Federation.

VII

LETTER TO MR. KESHARI SINGH

Hyderabad, 16-9-1957.
Dear Keshari Singhji,

I received your letter and newspapers clippings. I was very glad to read your letter. Not only Mr. Dhebar and Mr. Pant but others too will make efforts in this fashion. But if one decides firmly that we are not to serve self interests but have to fight for the country and the oppressed people then all those things become meaningless.

Yours sincerely,
Rammanohar Lohia.

Translated from the original in Hindi.

VIII

LETTER FROM MR. BRIJMOHANLAL

Patna, 19-9-1957.
Dear Sir,

I have the honour to send herewith a copy of the resolution on merger of BCF. with the Socialist Party passed by the working committee of the Bihar State Backward Classes Federation on September 15, 1957 for favour of information.

News cuttings are attached.
Yours sincerely,
Brijmohanlal,
Secretary, Bihar B. C. Federation.

The following is the full text of resolution passed by the executive committee meeting of the Bihar State Backward Classes Federation held on September 15 1957.

"Just after attainment of freedom a political organization in the name of Bihar State Backward Classes Federation was formed

in the year 1947 by the members of the backward classes which later on became an all India organization. After one year of its existence, by Uffaraul Conference of the Federation it was converted into a social and cultural organization which was evidently as a result of the influence of Congress organization. The BCF. movement aimed at reorganising and revitalising the backward classes which formed overwhelming majority of the total population of the country, for realisation of democracy as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi where a Harijan would become the president of India. By the efforts of the federation the government awarded some scholarships to the students of backward classes and under Article 340 of the Constitution of India, Backward Classes Commission was appointed by the president of Indian Union to investigate into the condition of backward classes and to recommend to the government. On the recommendations of which an appropriate enactment was to be passed by Indian parliament for betterment of their conditions. But ten years of Congress rule belied all hopes of the people and turned democracy into an autocracy of privileged classes by harnessing all resources and directing five year plans modernizing these previledged classes ignoring and at the cost of the interest of the backward classes and other oppressed people of India.

The reactionary policy of the government such as creating dissensions and divisions in BCF. movement, overtaxing the members of the backward classes, non-implementation of recommendations of B. C. Commission and usurping all their rights led Indian backward classes to think in terms of organising a political party of their own and just before the last general election the Indian National Backward Classes Federation was declared a political party.

Keeping in view the past history of the BCF. movement the executive committee welcomes the merger talk between Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Mr. R. L. Chandapuri which it considers a right move in the right direction in the interest of the oppressed people of the country for establishment of socialism and true

democracy by dethroning outocratic Congress government from power and requests the president of the Federation to call convention of the Party or as he deem proper for final decision on merger of the Party with the Socialist Party of India."

IX

THE INDIAN NATIONAL BACKWARD CLASSES FEDERATION
Patna. 23-11-1957.
From : R. L. Chandapuri. President,
The Indian National Backward Classes Federation,
Mandiri camp. Patna-1.

To : Mr. Gopal Narain Saxena, Chairman,
Socialist Party of India,
3-6-19. Himayatnagar,
Hyderabad.
Dear Sir,

By virtue of the power conferred upon me by the delegate conference of the Indian National Backward Classes Federation held on November 10. 1957 at Patna. I herewith send you the full text of the resolutions adopted unanimously by the conference and specially invite your attention to resolution No. 2 which refers to the merger of the federation with the Socialist Party of India for information and necessary action.

In view of the special circumstances obtaining in the state the West Bengal unit of the Federation has been given option to merge with the Socialist Party next year.

As informed the last date for enrolment of Socialist Party membership is December 31 next which is quite insufficient for BCF workers to enrol membership in large numbers. However the BCF workers will try to intermingle and identify with the Socialist Party workers by enrolling members as far as possible.

I hope and trust that you will consider all these matters and favour me with an immediate reply when I shall declare the

merger of my Party with the Socialist Party of India.
Yours Sincerely,
R. L. Chandapuri.

The following is the full text of the merger resolution:

"Resolution No. 2: This delegate conference of the Indian National Backward Classes Federation has taken into consideration the letters and views expressed between its president, Sri R. L. Chandapuri and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, leader of the Socialist Party and has given its thought to the view expressed by its president regarding the progress so far made by the Federation and its future prospect regarding the social, political and economic interest of the backward classes if the Federation merges with the Socialist Party of India and endorses the merger proposal of the Federation with the Socialist Party of India.

In view of the special circumstances of the BCF movement obtaining in the state of West Bengal this conference allows the option to the West Bengal unit to continue its existence as a political party till such time as it may deem fit and proper to take the question of merger with the Socialist Party of India.

This conference further authorises the president of the Federation to finally settle the merger of the Party in consultation with the Chairman of the Socialist Party of India.

Proposer—Mr. Jogendranath Mandal (West Bengal)

Seconder—Mr. Keshari Singh (Bihar)."

VASHISHTHAS AND VALMIKIS

Lucknow district jail,
10-12-1957.

Hon'ble minister for jails,

Please do not let the thought upset you that I am writing to you about your replies to questions in the legislature or about the incidents which prove that your jails are so many snake houses. Different types of prisoners inhabit the prisons. Some of them are undergoing long imprisonment. They and particularly such of them as are habitual offenders can, with great ease, be led into any kind of rowdyism. Jail officials as well as the police let loose scores of such prisoners on us. Pressing them from behind, they egged them on to attack us. A prisoner can neither hide nor escape even if he so wishes. To get him beaten by other prisoners means to let loose angry serpents on him. A simple des-
prisoners means to let loose angry serpents on him. A simple des-
you keep a person in a museum of live snakes, lock him up and then let out the snakes as and when you please.

Whatever you may say regarding my health, I shall say nothing about it. Neither will I speak of humanity. This kind of talk cannot go beyond a certain limit. What I have to ask you and your government is whether you are acting acording to law and those rules to which you referred. I may ask you for the law or rule which entitles scores of hooligans to surround me and remove me by force for production before a magistrate. The law should be such that it confers on the government the right to use force against a man who is already in jail and has intimated his complete disinterestedness with a case before the magistrate. I may further ask you for the law which entitles a magistrate to

employ the brute force of three persons to obtain my thumb impression. If you cannot produce such laws, many of you are guilty of an attempt to murder. However, I have to write to you about certain other mattters.

What are your rules governing the delivery of books sent from outside to prisoners? A Marathi drama, *Bhumi Kanya Sita* by Sri Varerkar was sent to me. It was given to me on the 30th November. The first leaf of the book was torn away, probably because the sender had written something on it. The sender's letter had arrived on the 6th of November. I therefore conclude that you or your officers detained the book for nearly 25 days. This is only in conformity with the usual jail temper in our country. Anything which is beyond understanding may be detained or torn away. I wonder how many more books and magazines have similarly been detained. I think that the weekly Chaukhambha and the monthly Mankind have also been detained by the authorities. If your rules regarding books are such, they need to be changed. Your act was decidedly bad, but for me its result in a way proved to be good. Throughout that harrowing night of the 30th November and the whole of the next day, I kept myself pleasantly immersed in the play. The whole of India draws inspiration from Ram and Sita. Also my mother was a Maithil and my father Avadhi. Perhaps the earth imparts its strains to the blood of its children. It is thoroughly irrelevant if the story of Sita is based on a fact of the past. The story has for ages superposed itself on the Indian mind.

I had not known that the Marathi language could be so sweet. The impression of my childhood that Marathi is harsh had long back been dispelled by the Konkani girl, Shanti Nayak, who sent me this book. This play has done it even more. May be Sri Varerkar is also a Konkani. Anyway I had no idea before of the sweetness of this language. In no Indian language have I found such a bias for nasal inflections. When Sita says:—

आणि हें लोकांच म्हणणं श्री रामांना पटलं ?...म्हणूनच मला इथं यांवसं वाटलं। कसं उणंउणं वाटतंय् त्यांच्या वांचून—

one wonders which prima donna of the world would not like to say it. You would not have appreciated or even understood this bias. There is no need. You may however understand that books are beyond your scope and as such you may not detain them. Much of the time of your jail administration is taken up in saving and misappropriating petty sums of money from the amount alloted for the food of prisoners. It would be well if books are given to prisoners without an attempt to censor. I am glad that I could get this book. The English language goes back to not more than 1,500 years and is therefore an infant compared to Marathi, Bengali, Tamil and Hindi, which includes Urdu, that go back to many thousands of years, perhaps six or seven, through Sanskrit, Prakrit or Tamil. It is true that concepts belonging to the modern age find greater expression in English and some of them even more in German. The time is not perhaps far when it will be difficult for either the English or the German language to hold its own in this respect against Russian. Slavish Congressmen who do not consider Hindi mature enough and want therefore to stick to English would do well to hitch themselves to the Russian language betimes. The inability of some to find maturity in Hindi or Marathi merely shows that they blame their inability to dance on the floor. I can also not understand how any Marathi could be an opponent of Hindi. This would be like a quarrel between Urmila and Sita.

I had been told somewhere that Sri Varerkar is the greatest of the living playwrights of India. "Bhumi Kanya Sita" indicates as much. This play revolves round the axis of Sita, the daughter of earth, and Shambuk, the son of earth, the axis of woman and Sudra. The synoptic background of this play is very interesting and powerful. For an Indian it has a sense of tragedy, a continuing pain thousands of years old and yet current. The female characters of the play—Sita, Urmila, Vasanti and Kushika—are all very powerful and lively. The character of Shambuk, however, suffers from artificiality and weakness. His speech is affected by a sugary artificiality. Sri Varerkar should himself think over how the character of such a powerful Sudra

got so weakened at his hands. The character of Ram also has the fault of excess. A limited personality cannot speak exaggeratedly. When he must speak firmly he will not repeat himself. However I am not here to attempt a criticism of "Bhumi Kanya Sita." I am for the present concerned with the two traditions of Vashishtha and Valmiki, whose conflict and struggle forms the axis of this play.

I am rather surprised how men like Sri Varerkar who know all this can still permit themselves to accept petty favours of the present government which is the continuator today of the Vashishtha tradition. Many Indian artists have not been able to give themselves a code of conduct and a general lack of character has resulted. That in itself, however, is not a matter of very great import. The real thing to see in "Bhumi Kanya Sita" is the speech of Vashishtha laden with such words as "deportation" and "beheading." Ram's speech here and there is a restraining factor, but basically it is Vashishtha who lays down the law. Even so, some limitation of excess is achieved. Today, however, the story is different. The ruler and the high priest are combined in one person. The speech of the ruler of today is also similarly surcharged with words like "deportation" and "beheading." He is a slave to the same traditions that were responsible for the intolerance of Vashishtha.

The prime minister of India has lost his balance. Why? Is it because the Dravida Kazhagam is burning the national flag and copies of the constitution or is it because the Kazhagam people broke the threads and snipped the tufts of bathing Brahmins? Perhaps both these things are simultaneously revolving in his mind. The constitution, tradition and Brahmin self-interest have so linked up as to make him a full incarnation of Vashishtha. There is no doubt that the Dravida Kazhagam is indulging in very bad acts. The burning of the constitution and the national flag must be condemned. Breaking somebody's thread by force is equally condemnable. But the destruction of symbols like the thread and the tuft is praiseworthy. Should I get an opportu-

nity to speak to Ramaswami Naicker I would certainly appreciate his hurt feelings, but would try to restrain his bitterness from improper deeds. What, however, is the ruler doing? He is replying to an intolerant Shambuk in the vein of a die-hard Vashishtha. At one time he asks them to leave India. At others he talks of crushing them or sending them to jails and lunatic asylums. The same language of deportation and beheading.

This language does not belong to India, at least not to the real India. The language of real India and also real China is different. Old religions have the capacity to stand a lot of criticism. They tolerate decrying, condemnation and even abuse with a smile. They are firm when necessary. New religions especially those emanating from the West and Central Asia are temperamentally incapable of tolerating any denunciation. It is true that some Hindus who do not know the spirit of their religion have started burning books that criticise Ram or Krishna. These men will end up with breaking this great country. The burning of Ramayana is condemnable but even more so is to burn any criticism of Ram or to behead the critics of Ram.

I would always remember the words of Mrs. Aung San. I asked her about her sister who was a rebel then and perhaps still is. Mrs. Aung San replied "I am a Burmese and a mother to all my children, both loyal as well as rebel. I shall punish them but still they are my children.!" India is the mother of all her children, even the rebels. The prime minister has bungled the Naga question and is now out to bungle the Dravida question. He does not know that mother India loves her rebel children even though she punishes them.

About the year 1937 the prime minister once talked to me rather strangely about a Muslim League demonstration. These Leaguers forcibly entered the U. P. legislative assembly and had tried to chase out Congress-men from there. It was indeed bad to have done so. But I was stunned to hear the prime minister's remark. We were alone and he said that Pant was a weak person

and had he been in his place, he would have replied with machine guns. I had not by that time understood the prime minister fully. But even so I disagreed with him and asked him how he could say such a thing being a believer in democracy and non-violence. He at once took a turn-about and said that I should not take literally what was merely a manner of speech.

The prime minister's mind has always been coloured with the destructive wrath of a Vashishtha Brahmin and not with benign anger. During the Noakhali days of Gandhiji I had occasion to see the unsettling effect of the rainsoaked jungles and muddy stretches of East Bengal on him. Of course these were not the real reason. The real reason for which he had made up his mind to remove that area from the map of India was different. In a fit of temper he even told me that a Hindu is a Hindu and a Muslim is a Muslim. I said I did not know that but I did know that a Brahmin is a Brahmin. The prime minister knows how to contain himself. He kept quiet and changed the topic. Recently Ram Lakhan Chandapuri had an interesting talk with me. Sometime back, when the question of his joining the Socialist Party had not yet opened, Chandapuri pleaded with the prime minister for the inclusion of more Sudras in Congress ministries and other positions. The prime minister accepted his plea but in turn told him that Brahmins will also have to be included in a ministry like that of Tamilnad. At that time the Tamilnad ministry did not have a single Brahmin. It should however be remembered here that Brahmins constitute a mere 4% of the population in Tamilnad. They are sufficiently powerful in almost all respects. If a Tamil Brahmin can be more helpful than others in bringing about radical changes in and rejuvenation of the country, I would certainly desire his inclusion in the ministry. But never on the plea of Brahmin representation or protection of Brahmin interests. That would merely mean the further strengthening of the strong.

The mind steeped in self-interest and group interest belongs to a Brahmin of the Vashishtha tradition. He knows how to kill or

die for a tradition. He has the capacity to renounce anything and everything for the interest of his group but side by side a continuing purpose of his life remains the material advancement of himself or his family. His traditions may not necessarily be indigenous. He may accept such foreign traditions as he may like. But that would make no difference to his behaviour at the time of any blow to his interests or his values. As such time he would coil himself like a snake and sit poised for an opportune strike.

It is possible that you have misunderstood me. My family traditions and self-interests would want me to be a friend of the Vashishtha Brahmin. Baniyas and especially those of them who occuply a high position in the hierarchy of caste by virtue of their having been wholesale traders have for thousands of years been carrying on a historical entente with the Brahmins. For generations after generations Baniya women and Brahmin men and Brahmin women and Baniya men have been linked in amorous relationships which are symbolic of the Bania-Brahmin alliance. This Bania-Brahmin alliance is one of the prime movers of Indian history. The Bania lords the nation's belly. The Brahmin lords the nation's mind. What stability and how many different gains and advantages have these two given to the country, I do not want to assess here. What I have to say now is that if the nation, that is, all the 40 crores that constitute it, has to strengthen itself, it can only be done through the destruction of this Baniya-Brahmin monopoly over the belly and the mind.

Now you would have understood that I want the total destruction of the Birla-Nehru monopolistic alliance. Do not be startled. The interests of the money bags as well as the spiritual leaders, of Birla and Nehru are inextricably linked up. Occasional divergencies between the two make no difference. After all lovers also quarrel sometimes. They are particularly insignificant at a time when the Vashishtha tradition is producing Baniyas like Birla who are so petty and Brahmins like Nehru who are

bursting with conceit. These superficial clashes can no longer cover the real identity of interests beneath. For how can the economic and spiritual owners of the land can renounce each other's permanent and combined interests. They prosper together. One thing I may make clear here. I do not have the slightest objection to the relationships between Bania and Brahmin males and females. I would only want their extension to Brahmin-Bhangi, Baniya-Chamar, Ahir-Pasi, Kahar-Brahmin and the like. I know that we would yet have to wait long for the fulfilment of this dream. At the same itme I know that in the effort to actualise the dream lies the hope for a strong India.

I have not written about all Brahmins or all Baniyas. But only of these who belong to the tradition of Vashishtha. Men like Raj Narain Singh, Madhu Limaye and Baleswar Dayal also belong to Brhmin families and better persons than them cannot be found either in the Socialist Party or in any other Indian party. They will perhaps not like my reference to them as Brahmins. For those of the Valmiki tradition the present age constitutes the last chapter of caste. It is meaningless to talk of equality while maintaining separate castes. Castes have to be abolished. Even their nomenclatures should go. Sudras, Harijans, Muslims, and women must be placed in high positions even though they may not be fully deserving. The Vashishtha Dvijas, however, will never like it. From mother-killer Parasuram to nation-killer Nehru stretches the Vashishtha tradition of fanatical justice. From Visvamitra to Visweswariah extends the liberal tradition of Valmiki.

Vashishtha was perhaps a foreigner. The present prime minister is definitely a foreigner. I do not mean only facial characteristics. I have not seen his face for the last ten years except once from far away at the time of Kruschev's visit. But the number of his Vashishtha like acts is such that one cannot help recollecting his face. And the recollection brings before the eyes an Armenian face. I have seen these faces in Nicosia and the Greek-Armenian quarters of Cairo. But after all how does the face matter? What matters is the mind. The prime mini-

ster has a mind which essentially belongs to the West and Central Asia, a Magi mind, a mind of "the sacred book," inimical not alone to evil, but also to the evil doer. The Indian mind is either inert or when active opposes the evivl alone. The man who is an enemy of the evil doer has necessarily to befriend evil.

Who is a native and who is an alien? The distinction is cardinal for a correct reading of Indian history; the distinction between the foreigner Salecus and the native Kanishka, and that between the foreigner Mohammed Ghazni and the native Sher Shah, Hun the foreigner and Rana Sanga the native, Babar the foreigner and Bahadur Shah the native. The curious fact about these natives is, however, that they seem to rejoice in defeat. Their bravery mostly consists of their showing courage in defeat. Their children also feel proud of the annals of their wounds of defeat. The one great question is how to remove this peculiar weakness of the Indian mind and how to strengthen the Valmiki tradition. This tradition seems to have somehow inhered defeat in itself.

Why am I writing at such length to you? Perhaps because you are the minister for the snake house. Vashishtha has failed once. He may succeed some other time. That is why I wish to warn my countrymen against the Vashishtha tradition and call upon them to destroy it root and branch. Another reason is that the man who is your master today was once my teacher also, although not now. Should you be unable to reach the whole of this letter to him, you may at least send him this message from me: "O fanatic Brahmin, be tolerant and just. If the desire is too strong be relentless but give up fanaticism." Who knows, the prime minister may take the advice although what really matters is that the country takes it. The Indian blood has compassion and firmness. Fanaticism is only a symptom of its weakness.

You and many others would be shocked at my calling the prime minister a fanatical Brahmin. In fact, some years ago I would myself have reacted similarly. Some will wonder how a man like him, cosmopolitan in his taste for food and clothes,

friendly and social to all, particularly to the minorities and the oppressed, can be a fanatic Brahmin. They will certainly think and say that there is an error in my thought. I would only ask them to think again and patiently. As far as food and clothes are concerned, there is no difficulty in the argument. A Valmiki may cover himself with tree-barks and leaves. He may well go about in a loin cloth or at least simple clothes. But not so Vashishtha. He is the high priest of royalty and must live in full royal splendour and even more so if he himself is king. I have already said that he can accept any tradition, foreign or native, modern or ancient. Whether he dons 'churidars' or pantaloons, sherwani or Jodhapur is immaterial. All that is necessary is that the attire should accord to some regal tradition. The royal tradition of the minimum attire is now so ancient that people have almost forgotten it. I guess that the food of Vashishtha would also have answered the most varied and delicate taste not necessarily heavily spiced or that of a gourmand. He would certainly have eaten meat.

Even so, the question remains how with all his liberal ideas and behaviour in regard to women and muslims, the modern Vashishtha can be called a "fanatic Brahmin." I have given to this problem long and sympathetic thought. If one were to enter the root of this matter, symptoms of orthodoxy may be found. The liberal veneer is only superficial. The prime minister took some sort of a stand on the laws relating to marriage and property right of women. Apparently the stand was liberal and progressive. In reality however, it was an expression of the Western tradition which is a few hundred years old now and is also called the tradition of modernity. I do not mean that the stand was wrong or harmful. Women must be given equal rights with men. Really speaking they must even get more if equality is to be obtained. But this stand of the prime minister was in no way a big step in the direction of equality between man and woman. These laws are not at all relevant for more than 80% of India's women. To the extent that the present social and economic system permits, they enjoy them even now. They have a mean-

ing only for a few high caste women in Brahmin, Bania and Thakur homes. Again, the same group interests, the same hackneyed desire for modernization. I repeat that it was a good act. Do not jump to the conclusion that the Vashishtha Brahmin never does a good act. We must be gratified for even the smallest freedom of any kind given to the smallest group, but we must at the same time comprehend it as such. The act was good but incomplete and initiated by twice-born self-interest. A Valmiki would have thought of the other 80% women also. He would have applied himself to find a way to uplift them from their drudgery and privations. The problem of the majority of Indian women is the lack of water taps and latrines. The Indian woman is condemned to the drudgery of drawing water often dirty and muddy from distant wells or ponds and carry it home every morning and evening. She must also save her modesty only by easing herself in the open fields either before sunrise or after sunset. The modern Vashishtha probably does not know all this hell of water or lavatory. If he does, he gives it no thought. Even if he thinks, he does so with the rings of his tobacco-smoke. His concern is limited to the Sitas and the Urmilas. Five thousand years have brought just one distinction. The Vashishtha of five thousand years ago ardained all possible restraints for Sita and wanted innocence to be proved each time by the ordeal of fire. The modern Vashishtha, however, wants to remove all the shackles that bind the Sitas, but so far as the Vasantis and Kushikas are concerned, their role continues as before to serve the desires and pleasures of Vashishtha. To them the doctrine of equality does not extend.

In case of the Muslims, it is the same story again. I do not think that Vashishtha has any real regard or respect for Muslims. In fact he has no real regard for anybody. Why should the Muslims be an exception? As everything else, Muslims are also an instrument for him, an instrument to be used when necessary for state organization, defence of tradition or fulfilment of self-interest. How is it, one wonders, that the prime minister wakes up to and concerns himself with the protection of Muslims only

when there is a challenge from some Patel or Tandon. The bogey of protection of Muslim interests is raised only when the need to consolidate and strengthen his own position arises. In the absence of any threat to the stability of his position, the concern for Muslims also fades away. It was clearly demonstrated during the last riots. The Muslims' passion was first whipped up and the prime minister loudly condemned books disparaging Mohammad. When he had sufficiently provoked Muslims into some action, he immediately denounced them as Pakistani agents. The poor fellows were suppressed. The Indian mind must have patience to hear criticism of Ram or Mohammad. It does not at least spill blood or burn books. Neither does it hasten to brand any misguided countryman as a traitor or foreign agent. The prime minister has no concern over the Muslims. For otherwise, the thorns that rankle in the hearts of Muslims and Hindus would continually be sought to be weeded out. There would not be one-sided appeasment of neither Hindus nor Muslims. Justice, broadmindedness and, when necessary, firmness would be brought into play. But never cruelty and vindictiveness. Perhaps the problem could have been solved. There is no doubt that the day the Indian Muslims are sincerely loyal to this country, the foundation of Pakistan will also start tottering. But to win their loyalty their hearts and also the hearts of the Hindus will have to be changed. Certain necessary acts for their material uplift will also have to be undertaken. Presently nothing is being done in this direction. Artisanship as well as small scale farming are in a ruined state. Most of the Muslims belong to these two vocations. Just as there is no concern for water taps and latrines for women, there is none for small crafts and agriculture. The preoccupation seems to be with new and modern palatial buildings and large factories, whose advantages and profits accrue mostly to the Dvijas. It should be remembered that even among the Dvijas, 90% live on near starvation levels. The benefits of modernization extend to a mere 10% of the Dvija population. This is again in keeping with the Vashishtha tradition.

Vashishtha is endowed with great ability. Please do not think that I do not know his qualities. This prime minister is a hero of words, but only of the contemporary word and not the historic. Success in politics is not possible without opportune speech but such success is short lived. It is easily forgotten. The people consider it a precious possession today but as easily throw it off as junk some other day. Historic words are different. They have the power to make a nation and its people. It is often a long process, sometimes extending to 20 or even 50 years. The historic and the opportune words combine only rarely as in a Gandhi.

Vashishtha is capable of great attachment for those who are included in the close coterie of his near and dear ones. Once the prime minister was somewhat indisposed. I was in the city by chance and called upon him. He was worried. His daughter was to arrive next morning from abroad. He felt that he would not be able to go to the airport. I told him repeatedly that there was nothing to worry about, as many other people and her aunt would be there. The prime minister was worried as to what she would feel if she did not see him. Yet I told him that after all people would immediately tell her that you were slightly indisposed. But he showed his concern for the one or two minutes of disappointment that would be caused to her. She would not be able to see him while getting down from the plane and would be beset with all sorts of apprehensions till somebody will give her news about him. May be Vashishtha's heart is still the same for his own near ones but I would not be too certain. It is doubtful whether his hard-heartedness can for a long time keep the distinction between the dear ones and the rest.

Firmness is wholly different from fanaticism. A man should always be firm in his words and deeds. A state has necessarily to be firm. As long as the state exists, there will perhaps be need of punishment. We must indeed dream for the day when man will be able to run his social life without having to penalise or punish. But until that dream comes true some provision for penal action will have to be retained. Thieves will have to be punished and also men like me

who should and will always be there, for otherwise the state will no longer be a running stream, but a stagnant pool. The only question is about the form and quantum of punishment. Punishment should always be in accordance with the law and not the hostile whims of the powers that be lest the picking of a flower from the King's garden or even advice to the gardeners about better methods of growing flowers be punished with forfeiture of life. The distinction between punishment and vindictiveness should never be lost sight of. Those who command the power of the state should observe even greater care. The Vashishtha tradition however is one of revengefulness. Where revenge and spite take the place of firmness, orthodoxy and fanaticism undermine regard for justice, hypocrisy in principles must prevail. When the people are denied even a few drops of milk by their poverty, their wails are drowned by the loud declarations of Vashishtha that he himself does not take milk. He will conveniently forget the meat and other nourishing diets that he takes in place of milk. Vegetarian Vashishthas will not refer to the number of seers of milk that they consume in different forms, but will only relate accounts of how many chataks of rice or wheat they have reduced in their diets. A Vashishtha cannot live without sanctimonious hypocrisy. He has no difficulty in acknowledging at times of need as an incarnation of Buddha the very man whose policies and compromises he has earlier denounced as belligerent. He can glibly talk about human rights, democracy and co-existence to his superiors in strength and at the same time get the weaker ones dragged to low-courts and turn houses of justice into houses of torture.

When principles are pressed into the service of selfish or group interests, they cease to have any generality or permanance. The truth also suffers similarly. This gives rise to hypocrisy. An old country like India full of diversities can maintain its unity only on the basis of truth and principles. Hypocrisy and fanaticism can only undermine this unity further. There is no doubt that the obstinacy of Mr. Jinnah was responsible for breaking the country. But alongside of that was also the opportunism and

hypocrisy of Mr. Nehru. He gave his word to Mr. Khallique-Zaman for the 1936 elections in alliance with him. But when success exceeded his expectations, he spurned his word as also his erstwhile friend. Even now the same unprincipled opportunism and hypocrisy prevail. Vashishtha is keeping up his traditions and his self-interest. But what is happening to Punjab, Maharashtra and Tamilnad and what more will happen elsewhere? Let us always remember that true disciple of Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar, is also a symbol of the Valmiki tradition. When the throne of power came in sight, no matter that it was a ruined and broken throne, Vashishtha did not once turn his face to him who he thought could not keep up with him in the race, however long the comradeship may have been. I do not see that a personal friendship should dictate or even influence politics. Many a friendship is made or marred for a nation or for humanity. But it is a different matter when friendships are discarded often and continually for self-interests. We in India have become very cruel. This land of compassion and non-violence is perhaps the cruelest country in the world today. Some days before my arrest, a friend of mine took me alongwith her husband to the Calcutta zoo. Recent additions to that zoo are two Japanese bears. They are very fond of ice-cream. We gave them some. They were merely enjoying it when suddenly for a few seconds they were locked in a fight. They rolled and one of them even injured the other so that blood came out. The more noisy one was the male but the one who drew blood was the female. I would not be very positive however. May be they were two brothers. The fight was very short. The swans are also very nice. How gracefully they swim and how beautifully they go round each other holding their necks in a hundred different poses. It looks like a real swan dance. I would like all ministers of India to sometimes visit zoos. They may become less cruel. I am writing all this purposely because Aruna insisted on me that day to crusade for the prevention of cruelty to animals. At that time I did not pay much attention to her words, coming as they were from one who was a meat-eater, although I have also known for a long time now that many vegetarians are more cruel to their cattle than

many meat-eaters. Many others among them are cruel by temperament. Even so I asked Aruna why she did not give up meat-eating. She gave the usual arguments—taste, habit and family tradition—but said that it was all the more necessary that as long as animals are butchered for the satisfaction of human plates, their killing should be made as painless as possible. In our country animals are butchered mercilessly. I was shocked to hear that portions of live tortoises are sold in the Calcutta market. Limb after limb is severed and sold, and the poor creature is all the time wreathing in agony. Who are these sellers and butchers and who are these buyers and eaters? The butchering of goats and the like is also quite cruel if not as much. The current Indian mind has become wantonly cruel. If animals are the recipients of such beastly torture, men like me can also not escape at least a part of it. I have always been a friend to animals but am even more so now.

The weak man is also the more cruel. He tries to cover his weakness by acts of cruelty and violence. Ministers in Lucknow and Delhi are also like that. They will do any thing to satisfy their false sense of prestige. The pervading cruelty of life is always a sustenance. They have no fear of punishment also. In a situation where everyone is more or less cruel and prestige-ridden, there is no surprise if ministers are a little more so. Who is aware that the forcible dragging of a mute man to a court of law is merely a demonstration of meaningless cruelty and mad prestige? A photograph could have served as well. Who is conscious that speech and proper speech alone is the medium for a court's proceedings and not the show of force or a hide-and-seek. The court played hide-and-seek with me before the 18th and used the baton after that date. What was the need when I had voluntarily given up my right of speech? Who demands to know the law which allows the court to use force against a man who has voluntarily foregone his right of speech? What is it if not meaningless cruelty? Some people argue that the law requires the presence of an accused in the court. But what does the law say when someone refused to be willingly present and informs

the court accordingly in writing? Does the law then provide that the court will use force to secure the presence of such a man? For instance, there is the law that forbids people to throw scrap and dirt on roads just as there is the law that requires the accused to be present in court. This law is not sufficient in itself. There is the further provision that anyone who throws scrap on the road will be liable to such punishment. The law could similarly have provided a punishment for the person who is prepared to accept the penalty imposed by the court but does not want to be present in it. But the law does not.

No longer can the politics of the Vashishtha Dvija, the politics of intolerant and rabid prestige-seeking, instil new life in the country. I am certain that only that party can now make India happy, strong and truthful, which is predominated by women, Sudras, Harijans and Muslims. The old axis of Sita and Shambuk will now have to be reinforced further. Undoubtedly Dvijas will also remain in such a party. They have held the reins of leadership in the country for a long five thousand years and there certainly will be some among them who are lured by the vision of India's rejuvenation. I used at one time to liken them to the salt in the soup, so that they would immolate themselves and merge their identities with the common people. I may point out one inadequacy in this simile. There is the danger of the salt exaggerating its qualitative importance in spite of its little quantity. I would, therefore, suggest another simile, that of the manure in field. As far as possible, the seed should be women, Harijans, Sudras and Muslims. They must be given positions of leadership. The Dvijas should be the manure which helps the seed to grow. Such a party has to be organised.

You people are very cruel in regard to women also. I had received some letters just before my arrest, which concerned personal problems and difficulties. A reply would have rendered some solace. I sent three such letters on the 8th November. None of those contained anything relating to politics. It is possible that two or three sentences in one of them may have been considered to have a remote bearing on politics but they could be

censored out. I learnt from Prof. Rama Mitra on the 27th that she had not received her letter. I conclude that Shanti Naik and Margo Skinner also did not receive theirs. Poor Margo wanted to come to India to work in our journal. Each one of these women has rendered some service to man. One of them has been to jail both under foreign and native rule, another has kept in her charge such material during the 42 revolt at such personal risk as would have unnerved most of you and the third has spurned a twentyfive hundred rupee job for the sake of truth. What could you lose, if the letters reached and offered some consolation to these women.

The rules relating to books and letters at least should be amended at once, although there is need for many others to be changed. Even after the British left, jails continue to be as infernal as before. You always talk about laws and rules. But even of the set of rotten rules that British imperialism forced on the country, you fail to observe such as are a bit more human. The British framed a rule about the classification of prisoners, which still continues on paper. The classification of a prisoner rests on three criteria—income, education and the intent of crime. It is clear that civil resisters have no selfish motive. In accordance with this rule, all civil resisters should have been kept in the superior class. But your government is vicious. You keep on harping on the rules and also continually breaking them.

At one time, the government kept me under detention in a palace. What was the rule? It is true that I wrote to the High Court against that, although not because I did not like a palace but because the police superintendent who was my guard was also stationed inside my room. Any number of police guards may be stationed outside the prisoner's room but not inside it. During my first incarceration in free India Sardar Patel permitted interviews with me to be held inside the barracks and any number of them on any day. Your state government did the same when I was lodged in the Naini jail on another occasion. Possibly, Sardar Patel was not so deeply coloured in the Vashishtha hue or

again it may be that the hostility of Vashishtha fanatics has grown with time. But then why talk about laws and rules?

Sardar Patel was a Sudra. I have a feeling that even a Vashishtha Sudra is a far better person than a Vashishtha Dvija. How greatly concerned were all Dvijas at the time when that fanatic Vashishtha Brahmin, Morarji Desai, had to give up the chief ministership of Bombay? How overwhelmed were some persons with his capacity of administration, talent for organization and for strict punishment and the security of the state that seemingly went with these. Chavan, the Sudra may belong to the same tradition but has, at least, proved himself superior to Sri Desai. That is why I also think that the Sudra Kamaraj Nadar may do better than the Dvija Nehru. The group interests and traditions of these Sudras are of a different sort, although they are part of the greater Vashishtha tradition. That is why even these people cannot rejuvenate the country. I am saying only this that even inside the Vashishtha tradition, the Sudra is better than the Dvija, although both of them are irrelevant for recreating a new life in the country. It is true that, placed in petty positions of power, a Sudra may initially turn out to be more cruel than the Dvija. In the jail, the Chamar or Pasi, Kalwar or Ahir who eventually becomes a prisoner-warder cannot be matched in his abuses and assaults by a similar Dvija. In the same way, a Harijan officer too remains in a constant tension and indecision and is always eager to prove that he is in no respect weaker than the Dvija. He suffers from the same mad desire for prestige. But in our uphill journey, these initial steps are unavoidable.

Anyway, talking about climbing slopes is useless. You cannot even walk ahead on plain ground. What changes have you brought about in jail administration during the last ten years? Have you done anything to minimise beating and abuse in jail? Have you made an attempt to instil any sense of self-respect in prisoners? Have you not preserved the whole system of spying on and denouncing other prisoners by elevating selected prisoners to superior status?

In some respects matters are even worse than during the British days. Every barrack is stuffed with at least double the number of prisoners that it can accomodate. Jail dresses have also deteriorated. Perhaps the food is a little better though still almost inedible. Certain superficial reforms have been introduced as the provision of parole for long term prisoners. Such reforms, however, do not affect the jail administration in the least. That would require supply of food, accommodation and clothing to prisoners in accordance with the rules and a complete change in methods of jail administration so that some education as well as entertainment is provided to the inmates. What is the use of offering some entertainment once in four or six months? .

All your actions are designed for cheap publicity. They are superficial and for show. Why was the prisoners' conference held? Out of the fifty or sixty thousand prisoners in the state thirty or forty prisoners were selected and bedecked in clothes whiter than even yours. I would be happy, if the prisoners wear such clothes every day but to dress them for special occasions is the height of fraud and hypocrisy. And who spoke at the conference? Three or four of them repeated parrotlike the prepared speeches they had earlier been made to cram. They were not permitted to bring on their lips what was in their hearts. Those who could really speak out were not even permitted to attend the conference. After all we were also prisoners at that time. Not one newspaper, not even our own weekly "Chaukhambha" commented on this aspect of the conference where no prisoner with an independent voice was allowed to go. Indian politics has become so lifeless and spurious that even those who have the right ideals lack awareness and comprehension.

I wonder how Brij Mohan Goyal from the Naini jail could go there. He knows all the Delhi and Lucknow ministers, who belong to Allahabad and I hope you also know him. You must have seen his book "Dharma Yuddha." It contains very intersting references to ministers, who belong to Allahabad and also sidelights on prison administration. That book created the whole trouble. He started distributing it at the conference even before

he could speak. After all he was a prisoner; all that needed to be done was to remove him to the jail. He was sent post-haste back to Naini from where he had come for the 'Prisoners' Conference.' Nobody even knew about it. That is the state of the people and the press—no curiosity and no nose to scent a news-story. There was yet another thing that was heart-breaking. Your chief minister announced a remission of one month from the jail terms of all prisoners on the occasion of the conference. That was on the 12th or 13th November. Expectation arose in the hearts of thousands of prisoners but when nothing happened, deeper disappointment came. The announcement materialised only on the 17th December. It is not decent to play this cat and mouse game with helpless prisoners.

How can there be any reform when the whole edifice of administration rests on untruth. I did not know that such a large number of prisoners is accounted for by section 109 of the Indian penal code. That section relates to vagrancy. At times it was used by the British against us. It is a thoroughly foul section and at that time you also were of this opinion. I think that it militates against the constitution also. Who knows how often and how seriously is the Constitution being contravened everywhere? In my own case, at least five of its bones have been broken. The Dravida Kazhagam is merely burning the text and effigies of the Constitution but you and your superiors are breaking its very bones. Which of the two is the greater traitor? Why is section 109 still on the statute book? Is it that its vicious nature is unknown to you? All that is required for an year's imprisonment under this section is the production by the police of an iron bar, a match box and a candle together with a statement that the accused was found in possession of these articles at dead of night. I think that in U.P. jails alone not less than three thousand prisoners owe their conviction to this section. In the whole of India the number may well be fifteen thousand. Half of these may be habitual offenders but the other half have undoubtedly been turned into thieves by the police and the magistracy.

What I really wish to point out is the shocking atmosphere of lies and fraud that pervades the law courts. Only this time have I been able to understand how a single iron bar can be used to incriminate and convict a hundred persons. The prosecutor, the accused and the judge, all know that this whole show of justice is a sham. Even if it be granted that most accused are really guilty, how can it justify the resort to lies and perjury by the police and its abetment by the magistrates? In every trial this story of proving even a charge by stock methods of forgery and fraud is repeated. It grows into a habit. First the magistrates and the police try these methods with thieves but with a little practice in lying and fraud they apply them in the case of persons like me also. Great care, therefore, has to be taken in order to keep the courts and the bureaucrats away from corrupt and pernicious habits. I did not know it before but now I know. The administration of justice even to hardened criminals must strictly accord to rules and procedures or else it will necessarily result in wronging many an innocent too. Right here is a section 109 prisoner who is separated from his blood-brother for ten years now, and neither knows where other is and whether he is alive.

This term in jail has given me a little more insight into suffering. One must suffer himself in order to understand the woes of the afflicted. I shudder to think that almost all cities have these houses of abject misery. Then there are the many big and small jails in Lucknow and other towns which are not called as such but where greater misery stalks. And what about those who are out of jails? Is their misery any less? Tengri Harijan of Gumtahi died of starvavtion on 7 November. Seven days later, his son Harisharan also succumbed to the pangs of hunger. At the time this news reached me his widow and three children were also on the point of death. Thousands are similarly breathing in the agony of hunger and eventually dying. Near-starvation is consuming crores of others. Here a mother is shedding helpless tears for being unable to clothe her children, there some father is wringing his hands for his inability to provide medicine for his sick child or education to others. They may be silent but they

are suffering. I am also suffering and am therefore better able to feel their tribulations. To a large extent the cause of our sufferings is also the same. Many of these people must be cursing you. I do not know how to curse, nor do I want to do it. Cursing is evidently the weapon of the weak but it perpetuates weakness as a part of life itself. My sole desire is to live to see the day when these suffering millions gather strength and rise. It will be wonderful.

You are not obliged to read this letter. As a jail minister, you are only an address. But if you do, even though parts of this letter hurt you, you may not attempt to reply.

20-12-1957. Rammanohar Lohia

P. S. I have received a letter today, 21st December, which tells me that my letters of the 8th November were posted only on the 30th November. —R. L.

This is a letter, translated from the original in Hindi, addressed to the jail minister of Uttar Pradesh. The following references have been given afterwards.

REFERENCES

Aung San, Mrs: Widow of the first prime minister of Burma who was assassinated by rebels in 1947; later lost a son through drowning; a sister married to the underground communist leader.

Babar: The Farghana Moghul who established Moghul dynasty in India by defeating the then ruler Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 A.D.

Bahadur Shah: The last Moghul Emperor of India who fought against the British in the First War of Indian Independence in 1857 A.D. and was subsequently imprisoned.

Dvija: The high-caste or the twice-born; the name derives from the ceremony of the sacred thread, which like Baptism but at a later age, implies a second and a more cultured birth.

Hun : A tribe which invaded India (450-475 A.D.) until the last Hun ruler Mihirkul was driven back by Yashodharman in 533 A.D.

Kanishka: Successor of Seleucus but of Indo-Greek origin, ruled Kabul, Kashmir and North-Western India in the 2nd century A.D.

Mohd. Ghazni: Carried 17 expeditions of loot and devastation through Northern India and Gujarat, who destroyed the famous Somanath Temple in 1024 A.D. A pathan of Afghanistan.

Parasuram : A Brahmin in Indian mythology so much devoted to the principle of obedience that he killed his mother at the order of his father.

Ramaswamy Naicker : Leader of Dravida Kazhagam, Tamilnad, agitates against Brahmins and for Dravidistan.

Rana Sanga: The Rajput warrior who ruled Mewar (1509-1527 A.D.) and fought Babar but was subsequently defeated in 1527 A.D., an Indo-Hun.

Seleucus : Macedonian Alexander's General and ruler of North-Western India and Afghanistan until he was defeated by Chandragupta in 302 B.C.

Vishveshvarayya: Was India's ablest engineer of modern times, maintained his wife in appropriate comfort even after she eloped and lived with his coachman.

Sudrak or Shambuk: Whom Ram punished for violating the Dvija monopoly of scriptures at Vashishtha's behest—one of four bad acts of Ram, the world's greatest man in the sphere of the limited personality, the other three being, the banishment of Sita, the killing of Bali from a position of concealment, incitement to Lakshman to cut off the nose of Shurpanakha, the sister of Ravan.

Urmila: Left behind by her husband Lakshman when he accompanied his brother Ram and his sister-in-law Sita into a fourteen year exile.

Vashishtha: Religious preceptor of Raghuvansha dynasty which ruled the kingdom of Avadh and Kosala, to which Ram belonged.

Valmiki : The poet sage belonging to the liberal traditions of India; author of "Ramayana," founder and inmate of a heterodox hermitage.

Vishvamitra: A Brahmarshi of mythology, reputed to be the author of Gayatri mantra into which he initiated people irrespective of caste, a highly revolutionary action and perhaps the first of its kind.



TALKS WITH MR. NAICKER

I

[A meeting took place with Mr. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, the Dravida Kazhagam's aged leader, on the 23rd January 1958 at Madras. The Kazhagam leader was undergoing six month's prison sentence on a charge of inciting his followers to violence against Brahmins. The talk took place in the general hospital where Mr. Naicker was lodged and lasted for an hour. Prior permission for the interview had been obtained from the Madras government. Here is reproduced a summary of the talk which appeared in "Chaukhambha" in Hindi. The conversation took place in Tamil and Hindi. G. Murahari acted as the interpretor.]

Mr. Naicker: I do not know English properly and do not know Hindi at all.

Lohia: You speak in Tamil and I in Hindi. This friend, Mr. G. Murahari, will act as an interpretor.

Mr. Naicker: Sorry, sorry. Very good.

Lohia: I wanted to meet you since a very long time. But that was not possible. The only purpose of my visit to Madras this time was to meet you.

Mr. Naicker: I am very happy to meet you. I feel that as if a long standing heavy burden from my mind has been removed.

Lohia: How is your health now?

Mr. Naicker: I am much better than before. I have to suffer these imprisonments for the sake of ideals.

Lohia: Persons of your age should not be in jail.

[Both agreed that the law in the country has reached a very low level. Law is being made dependent upon the likes and dislikes of certain individuals and not on the basis of justice.]

Mr. Naicker: I never incited my followers to violence. I only said that if Brahminism was not eradicated by peaceful means we should not be surprised if the people took to violence.

The prime minister while speaking at the Tirchinapalli meeting has done injustice to me by saying that I was mad and that I must get the maximum punishment.

Lohia: Indeed injustice has been done to you. A case of contempt of court can be instituted against Mr. Nehru, for when he delivered this speech, your case was being heard in the court. One of the reasons of my coming here to meet you is that I wanted to record my protest against the above statement of the prime minister and to impress upon you that in this matter most people in the north think like me and not like Mr. Nehru. I would want that you think over all the problems facing the country. It is good that you want destruction of the caste system and you agitate against it. The caste system must be ended. But this agitation should not be directed against individual Brahmins.

Mr. Naicker: I have nothing to do with violence. Reality is this that the press in Madras is in the hands of Brahmins and they want to defame me. I always keep myself restrained Probably, after my death security of Brahmins may become difficult. There is an article in "Kalki" to substantiate this. Sri Rajagopalachari writes regularly for it. It said that the sentence awarded to Naicker was very inadequate. The Madras government should appeal to the High Court to increase the sentence.

Lohia: Not to incite for violence alone is not enough, but it should be stated in clear terms that there should be no violence against individual Brahmins.

Mr. Naicker: I agree that violence will destroy both, Brahmins and my Party but this will not happen as long as I am alive.

Lohia: I am with you against the fight to eradicate the caste system and am prepared to go to jail with you. I would also welcome if a movement is started to remove caste name plates. But this is possible only if you give up your demands of, 1. Opposition to north India, which includes the demand of Dravidistan; 2. Anti-Hindi agitation; 3. Burning photographs of Gandhi; and 4. violance against individual Brahmins.

Gandhi is the symbol of the nation. His photos should not be burnt. I am generally of the opinion that nobody's photographs should be burnt. Nevertheless, if you burn photographs of Mr. Nehru I will not have much objection, for he is not the symbol of the nation. As far as the Constitution is concerned, it is improper to burn it, but I can tolerate its burning, for the government itself often violates the sanctity and limits of the Constitution.

Mr. Naicker: These things are not significant. The main fight is against the caste system. I repeat that I never incite violence against individual Brahmins. Our Party organ "Vidudalai" has never talked of violence in the past ten years.

Lohia: You consider over giving up these insignificant things.

[Both agreed that they will meet after Mr. Naicker's release and in the meantime Mr. Naicker will consider over these matters. Before departing, Mr. Naicker regretted that he could not entertain Lohia as he was in jail.]

II

The main purpose of my talk with the Dravida Kazhagam leader, Mr. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, was to persuade him to accept the unity of India.

I made it clear to Mr. Naicker that I certainly appreciated his hurt feelings but he should restrain his bitterness. Continuance of the Dravida Kazhagam campaign in its present form could only lead to destruction.

I was provoked when I heard the language in which the prime minister had condemned the Dravida Kazhagam activities. I wrote to the jail minister of Uttar Pradesh that I would, should I get the opportunity speak to Mr. Naicker appreciating his hurt feelings.

I have admiration for two qualities of Mr. Naicker: He is a man of action and he had a burning sense of resistence to injustice. I, however, strongly disagree with him in his methods.

There is no doubt that the Dravida Kazhagam is indulging in very bad acts. The burning of the constitution and national flag must be condemned. Breaking somebody's thread by force was equally condemnable. But the destruction of symbols of caste like the thread or tuft would be praiseworthy.

I told the Kazhagam leader that I stood for the destruction of caste. Mere caste reform would not suffice. I promised to accompany Mr. Naicker in a campaign, even breaking laws, for achieving this object. But I feel strongly that personal violence should be abjured. Personal violence would be against human rights.

I recall what Mrs. Aung San had told me when asked about her rebel sister: "I am Burma and mother to all my children, both loyal as well as rebel. I shall punish them, but still they are my children." The nation should realise that Mother India loved all her children, including rebels. Mr. Naicker had a right to feel hurt by the remarks of the prime minister on the Dravida Kazhagam.

I discussed with him the Kazhagam campaign against Hindi, Constitution and Gandhi's photos, as well as the demand for Dravidistan. I appealed to the Kazhagam leader that his grievances should not lead to the disruption of India. I wanted

that he should accept the unity of India. He should give up the demand for Dravidastan.

I told Mr. Naicker that I visualise the possibility of my speaking to him in Tamil and Mr. Naicker replying in Hindi. The Kazhagam leader, seemed to appreciate this approach. Mr. Naicker also agreed with me in his feeling that Mahatma Gandhi was today a sacred symbol and his pictures should not be insulted.

Mr. Naicker pointed out that he had not asked his followers to resort to violence. The judge who tried him had appreciated this point. His words had been misconstrued. His was only a compaign against caste symbols. Mr. Naicker assured me of his awareness that personal violence would only lead to mutual destruction. He would not want a situation similar to that which led to partition of India.

I cannot say that I had been able to convert Mr. Naicker. I was able to understand better the mind of this man of action I hope to pursue the contact and continue my efforts to influence Mr. Naicker and men of his line of thinking. I very much regret that on this single issue of language, the south talked of walking out of the Indian Union.



TOWARDS THE DESTRUCTION OF CASTES AND CLASSES

Caste is the most overwhelming factor in Indian life. Those who deny it in principle also accept it in practice. Life moves within the frontiers of caste and cultured men speak in soft tones against the system of caste, while its rejection in action just does not occur to them. If they are reminded of their acts, which are in such unbelievable conformity with caste, they point out with indignation their thought and speech. In fact, they hurl the charge of caste mindedness against those who remind them of their caste behaviour on the plea that while they engage in a healthy debate on principles and great outlines, their critics vitiate the discussion by bringing into it the polluted sphere of action. It is the critics, so they say, who create the atmosphere of caste. Who knows if the strange split between thought and action, characteristic of Indian culture more than of any other, is not the result predominantly of caste. An unalterable frame is what caste is. To live within it must necessarily demand a great deal of ingenuity, of thinking and acting in double, treble or more numerous sets.

The great facts of life such as birth, death, marriage, feasts and other rituals move within the frame of caste. Men belonging to the same caste assist one another at these decisive acts. Men of the other castes are there at the peripheri, more or less bystanders and onlookers. A common mistake must be rid of at the start. A certain amount of inter-caste activity appears to have taken place in recent decades in large areas of the country. In the first place, such activity is confined to the lesser rituals of feasting and does not extend to the major ones of wedding and child-bearing. Secondly, this activity is only superficially and deceptively inter-caste. Various groups of the high caste are

sometimes known to feast or wed one another. But the great schism between the high-caste and the low-caste is as great as ever, if not greater, in the sphere of real collective action. When people talk of inter-caste marriages and the like, they merely mean weddings between groups within the high-caste.

Caste is presumably the world's largest insurance for which one does not pay a formal or regular premium. The solidarity is always there, when everything else fails. In fact, there are few occasions for other things being tried out. Men just tend to make friends within the caste, their family most certainly. Such a close solidarity at child-bearing, funeral obsequies, weddings and other rituals must necessarily have its consequences on other aspects of life including the political. It must, in fact, influence and almost determine the mind and its basic thought. The political aspects are easily influenced. When a continual get-together takes place on all major and personal events of life, it would be somewhat bizarre if political events took place outside that framework. When men are puzzled at a caste voting more or less alike, they behave as though they had come from another planet. What would one expect a group to do that lives, child-bears, weds, dies and feasts together? To this most formidable list of common activity must be added the still more decisive activity of bread-earning, the common profession. Even where the common profession is in some ways no longer a mark of certain castes, the informal, often lame and halting, but almost unfailing scheme of insurance against unemployment provided by one's own caste continue to operate. If the caste did not vote together, that would be a puzzle. Even such breakaway from caste voting, which hardly, if ever, goes upwards of 20%, is ascribable to some substitute security that has been found in place of caste.

This division of Indian society into hundreds if not thousands of castes, which have a political as much as a social significance, explains why India wilts before foreign armies. When she has not so wilted in her history, it has almost always been those periods when the bonds of caste were loose. A great misreading of Indian history is current. The tragic succession of foreign con-

ests, to which the Indian people have succumbed, is ascribed internal quarrels and intrigues. That is nonsense. The gest single cause is caste. It renders nine-tenths of the population into onlookers, in fact, listless and nearly completely disinested spectators of grim national tragedies.

Castes have endured over thousands of years. They have d certain traits and aptitudes. Some kind of a selection has en place that is socially as significant as a natural selection. rtain skills of trade, craft, husbandry or administration or ndling of principles have become hereditary. A real breakough is almost always the work of a genius. With such castese determination of skills, one might expect great advantages flow out of such age long selections. That would have been if all skills fetched an equal social status or monetary reward. ley obviously do not. Some skills are believed to be unbelievably perior to others and there is an interminable series of steps the ladder. Castes of inferior skills are downgraded. They ngeal into an almost lifeless mass. They cease to be the revoir from which the nation may refresh and renew itself. umerically small castes of the most superior skills are the habial providers of the nation's leadership. In order to maintain eir most unnatural dominance, they become a seething mass chicanery but surfacially most smooth and cultured. The asses are lifeless, the elite are chicane. Caste has done that.

A study of castes in all its periods is not being attempted re. We are only concerned with the system of caste as it is day and as it probably has been in all periods of national decline id caste rigidity. In a sense, caste is a universal phenomenon. he tiny beginnings of its roots were laid bare by Mr. Khruschev hen he bemoaned in present-day Russia, the unwillingness of ersons with a higher education to do manual work. This rift etween manual and brain work and evaluation of one as the wer and the other as the higher and the increasing complexity and ermanency of this rift are behind the formation of caste. The idian experience of caste goes farther than that of any other ation and all the world may have lessons to learn from it. At

the moment, we are concerned with the terrifying damage castes have done India and how she may rid herself of it. The entire scale of values has been upset. The high-castes are cultured and chicane, the low-castes are stagnant and lifeless. What goes as scholarship in the country is but the name of a style of speech and grammar rather than substance of knowledge. Generosity is abridged to mean selfish appropriation through restricting its route to caste and relations. To beg is believed to be less shameful than to do manual work, for through beggary of certain higher types, the giver is favoured with inestimable benefits in the other world. Craftiness, open submission and secret insubordination become the marks of successful men of state rather than the virtues of straight dealing and bravery. Lie is enthroned as the supreme virtue of public life. A general atmosphere of fraud prevails, for to protect caste-men and relations becomes an aim rather than to protect justice and national well being. In essence the needs of caste are at war with those of the nation. Caste prevails, because it is the only reliable reinsurance of the individual against calamity or routine ill-being.

The utter imbecility to which caste has brought the nation was typified by the recent and total disrespect that the prime minister showed towards his own tongue. In the course of a fortnight, he made three solemn declarations, once, never to retire, then, to retire and, again, not to retire. That he does not hold much by man's gift of speech and thought is patent. That the nation does likewise is equally and more terrifyingly patent. How can the nation tolerate such imbecility? Partly because of caste, which blurs the vision, and of the great schism between the high and low caste, which makes the high-castes stick together through lie and deceit and even murder in certain situations. A word of unconscious insight, however fell from the prime minister's lips. He bewailed that he was so popular and yet the people did not act as he wanted them to. This was one of those rare occasions, when Mr. Nehru tells the truth. Wherein lies the mystery of this chasm between great popularity and equally great importance. The man is just not prepared to risk his popularity

for the sake of any big change. Mahatma Gandhi knew how to risk his popularity. He had a calf, the child of the sacred cow, injected to death in a certain situation; he had a monkey shot; he took Harijans into temples; he refused to attend weddings unless they were inter-caste; he sanctioned divorce; he had the large sum of 55 crores and more given to Pakistan at a time when Hindus held that treasonable; he acted and not alone spoke against property; in brief, he hardly ever missed doing anything that brought new life to the nation even if it brought calumny and danger to him. Nothing great ever got done without enraging some people. The great changes of society are always accomplished after some sections of opinion, sometimes large, are thoroughly angered. The old can always command votaries; only their number differs in varying situations. The skill of a great leader lies in narrowing the numbers of those whom he angers and the duration of their anger. But anger them, he must. He must risk his popularity with them, although that may eventually bring him an increased reputation. The prime minister, like any other typical product of the caste system in the country, is congenitally incapable of risking his popularity for the sake of any change.

The system of castes is a terrifying force of stability and against change, a force that stabilises all current meanness, dishonour and lie. An unholy fear prevails, lest, if some meanness or lie were to tumble the whole structure might topple. Post-freedom India is but a strict continuance of British India in most essential ways. The Indian people continue to be disinherited. They are foreigners in their own land. Their languages are suppressed and their bread is snatched away from them. All this is done for the alleged sake of certain high principles. And these principles tie up with the system of caste, the great chasm between the few high-castes and the four hundred million of the lower-castes. These high-castes must maintain their rule, both political and economic and, of course, religious. They cannot do it alone through the gun. They must instil a sense of inferiority into those whom they seek to govern and exploit. This they can best do by turning themselves into a select caste with speech, dress,

manners and living of which the lower-castes are incapable. The attitude of India's political parties is governed by this supreme consideration of having to instil a complex of inferiority among the mass of the people. Peoples' languages are undeveloped, their housing and general styles of living incapacitate them from good or great action and their mind is not worth considering. So must the high-castes weave the net of illusion. Current political opinions in India, because they reflect the false and unnatural interests of the high-castes, are not worthy of consideration.

The political behaviour of the lower-caste is amazing. Why they should become a willing part of this conspiracy is beyond understanding. One reason is clear enough. Caste gives them insurance, indeed, on less than an animal level, more than it does to the high-castes. They would feel helpless without it. Ofttimes, one gets the impression about these lower-castes as though their strenuous labour of the day were but a preparation for the caste feasts and rituals that are to follow. They are the real thing and all else is but a shadow. Anything that interferes with them must appear to them as highly undesirable. They have in fact legends and myths that justify their lowly situation and transfrom it into a symbol of sacrifice and lustre. The Kahars, variously known as Mallahs, Kaivarts, Naviks, who probably number more than a crore, tell stories about their mythical ancestors, who were simple, ungreedy, brave and generous and who lost to other ancestors of Kshatriyas and other high-castes because of their greater greed, willingness and deceit. Taken so their current life of misery must appear to the lower-castes as an unending succession of sacrificial acts for the sake of high principles. This sacrifice is for mythical symbols. It is undertaken not as an active principle that seeks change but as a passive submission to the existing. Such sacrifice has no meaning in history. But sacrifice is always consoling. Talking of these Mallahs and Kahars who are boatmen and fishermen when there is water, and domestic servants when further inland, one must mention their inordinate capacity to hold their breath while diving under water in search of the edible Makhana. Mallah boys of ten and under become active

practicants of deep-breathing yoga, and that under water, which can hold in a single breath for fifteen minutes and more. Similar yogis among the high-caste, of seemingly literate speech or refined dress, would probably hold that their mind is striving to be a vacuity during their yoga, while the Mallah boy's is not. As it is not possible for any one person to go into the minds of both these types, it is difficult to hazard an opinion. May not the minds be alike in either situation? If they are so utterly different as they are claimed to be, that is condemnation enough of the caste system.

The political behaviour of the lower-castes would appear to be a little less inexplicable on the assumption that a long tradion of ideological subjection has made them stagnate. This assumption is wholly founded. Centuries have instilled into them a meek acceptance of the existing, aversion to change, sticking with the caste in times of adversity as of good luck, and the search for high life through worship, rituals and general politeness. This can change. In fact, this must change. The revolt against caste is the resurrection of India or, shall we say, the bringing into being of a unique and hitherto unrealised occasion, when India shall be truly and fully alive. Is such a revolt possible? Scholars may with right deny it. Men of action will continue to affirm it. Some hope of success arises at the present time. The attack on caste is not single-barrelled. It does not climax into a shrill cry devoid of action. It is in fact as political as it is social. From the political attack on caste, in the sense of drawing the nation's leadership from all the castes in the country, may come that revolution which gives to all Indian society the solidarity and reinsurance now given to smaller groups by caste.

Elsewhere may be found extracts from the constitution and the annual report of the Calcutta Club.*This club is the top meeting ground of the Calcutta bourgeoisie, which is the largest segment of the Indian bourgeoisie. Its main activity centres around wine bibbing, while its patron is the President of the

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* *Appendix II*

Republic. India's Republic is pledged to the policy of prohibition with very considerable police repression as a consequence in certain areas. That the President of an alcohol repressing Republic should be the patron of an alcohol drinking club, is a measure of fraud and perfidy which India's higher castes are practising upon the country and themselves. The President, but more so, the government which advises him are guilty of treason against the Republic in a yet more major way. Europeans in India are one in three thousand and more of the population. Of Calcutta's population, they are surely no more than one in four hundred. They enjoy far greater comfort and security than any section of India's populattion. And yet they are accorded equal representation on the committee of this club. This equality of representation is guaranteed by the club's statutes. The club continues to think that England's monarch still rules India through her viceroy, although the President of the Republic is its patron. Some may be inclined to pass this over as a relic of the past which has escaped notice. These acts are in reality the result of deliberate design. India's bourgeoisie is ever imperilled. A vast sea of miserable humanity surges around it. It clutches at all kinds of symbols old and new and all kinds of authority both substantial and empty in order to keep itself afloat India's higher-castes and their government have therefore to practice continually treason against their Republic.

A farce symptomatic of the present setup of the higher-caste in the country was recently staged in this club. India's business classes are largely Bania, while her professional classes consist of Brahmin and Kayastha with the Baddis of Bengal thrown in and the Europeans enjoy their place of honour in either rank. A Bania recently asked for admission into this club. In pre-freedom India, he would probably not have made this request, for the business classes were largely nationalist while the top of the professional classes was largely pro-British. The Banias are now trying to make up for lost time. This applicant claimed to belong to the House of Tantias and was promptly blackballed presumably also by the British president of the club, Mr. Blease,

who said he had heard of the Birlas and the Tatas but not of the Tantias. An older brother of this gentleman is the newly elected treasurer of the Congress parliamentary party. All estimable Banias of somewhat nationalistic record are now trying to acquire culture which they had not so far done either because of their hurry to make money or because of Gandhiji. Mr. Birla and his family have also changed. From the closed collar *jodhpurs* of the Gandhi era they have now travelled to the coat and tie of the European. They run schools where little children are charged the most fantastic fees. One such school is ironically enough named the Hindi School, while its most privileged section of children from the age of five onwards is taught alone through the medium of English, and is not permitted to talk any other language. We are definitely living in a climate of nightmares, somewhat subdued and not sharp enough. To these men of money, now in hurry for culture, the Calcutta Club must be appearing as a paradise of romance and enlightenment. It must appear so to the mass of people. There gather top lawyers, the top executives, the top captains of trade and industry, occasonally with their fair ladies of perfumed breath and sparkling jewels. If only the people knew the Calcutta Club as any other club of the Indian bourgeoisie for what it actually is, a joint of wine bibbers, bribe takers and bribe givers, and pimps and of purveyors of state jokes and monkey English, they would repose their dream of enlightenment and for romance in worthier places.

Foreign rule set the Hindu against the Muslim, but that does not rub out the discord which native religions had created in the country. The policy of divide and rule, which governments pursue, must fasten on already existing elements of division. British rule in India had made use of the element of caste in the same manner that it made use of the element of religion. As the divisive force of caste was not nearly as strong as that of religion, the effort met limited success. The Maratha Party in Western India and also that of the scheduled castes, the Justice Party in the South and the mission-led block of Adivasis in

Eastern India were fruits of this effort. To them, must also be added the block of native princes and big landlords in Eastern India, which followed the lead of foreign rule and, during its last days, appeared discredited beyond recovery.

At the time the British made this effort, they were justifiably condemned. Foreign rule habitually accentuates and widens differences; it does not compose them. It must be condemned. But such condemnation does not remove the ground on which differences originate and thrive. British rule has ended but the caste parties that it gave birth to have continued into free India and are enjoying fresh access of strength. The Workers and Peasants Party and the Republican Party of Western India, the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam of South India and the Jharkhand Party of Eastern India alongside of the Ganatantra and Janata parties are not only regional parties but also caste parties. In fact, they represent and embody regional castes. These regional castes are decisively numerous in their area. The Adivasis of Chota Nagpur are the life-blood of the Jharkhand, the Mahars of the Republicans, the Marathas of the Workers and Peasants, the Mudaliars but also other non-Brahmins of the Dravida Munetra, and the Kshatriyas, not nearly as much, of the Ganatantra and the Janata.

A patriot and a progressive would look askance at the growth of parties of regional caste, even when they don a radical garb. Their capacity to disintegrate dare not be overlooked. They disintegrate the people. They disintegrate the mind. What, however, is the use of recognition by other castes of this capacity to disintegrate? The caste that becomes the instrument of such disintegration must recognise it. When can it do so? That raises the question of injury that castes have done to society or, in other words, the injury that society has done to the caste, which is in a position to hit back and does so.

The castes that went to form the Maratha, Justice or Scheduled Caste parties suffered ill-treatment from society. The British rulers made use of this sense of grievance and injury, a

very bad use indeed, but they did not and could not have created it. That is why the problem has persisted. In some cases, the caste that has suffered the injury and that which has caused it have changed places. But that does not solve the problem of injury. Furthermore, numberless castes have yet to make themselves vocal and effective and are today content to play a passive or a subsidiary role to the contending giants. This is the chief source of injury and injustice.

The political inter-play of castes has unfolded itself fascinatingly in Maharashtra and the drama is not yet over. Until 1930 and a little after, the Maharashtra scene was bafflingly simple, and its backdrop was Brahmin versus the rest. The succeeding period of around twenty five years has done nothing to diminish the amazing simplicity of the scene. Only the dominating caste has changed. The backdrop is today represented by Maratha versus the rest. The Marathas are a peculiar caste of Maharashtra, who claim to be Kshatriyas but are more like the cultivator-Sudras of North India. They have been the largest single downgraded caste of that area. Additionally, West India has few Vaishyas and Kshatriyas and the Kayasthas too are negligible, so that the Dvija or the high-caste are largely represented by the Brahmin.

The Maratha was the spearhead of the revolt against the Brahmin in Maharashtra although other down-graded castes assisted him in varying degrees. The revolt was pro-British in the beginning, because the Brahmins were on the whole anti-British, but the nationalist movement proved strong enough to absorb it. The Maratha entered the party of nationalism, the Congress Party, and almost took it over. The phenomenon of caste exclusion was witnessed again, with the roles changed. On the one hand, the Brahmin began gradually to lose his monopoly of political power and, on the other, the Maratha did not share his new found authority with the other down-graded castes. The change of the earlier situation, Brahmin versus the rest, was natural enough. When the dust of topical controversy has settled down and men are able to go behind the dispute between a

bilingual state for Maharashtra and Gujarat and a unilingual state for Maharashtra alone, the equally strong driving force of caste will be laid bare. There is no need to deny the force of language. With it is also mixed the equally potent force of caste. Bilingualism and the government party, which was earlier the revolting nationalist party, is represented by the Maratha. Unilingualism and the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, which is now the party of dissent against the government, is represented by the rest. The subterranean forces of caste have been all too powerful in this drama surfacially around language. The Brahmin, who has increasingly been losing political power, and the down-graded castes other than Maratha, which have felt left out, have been yearning for an opportunity to hit out. Their earlier effort to hit out on the Goa issue, when the Brahmin Shaniwarpet of Poona had for a while again become the cultural capital of Maharashtra, proved a curtain-raiser to the present language effort. The Marathas have themselves to thank for this development. They proved to be as greedy for power and monopolistic as any. They used the revolt of the down-graded castes for the assertion of their own supremacy and not for the destruction of castes as such and the injustice that goes with them. Ever and ever again, the revolt of the down-graded castes has been misused to up-grade one or another caste rather than to destroy the entire edifice of caste.

The Maratha could perhaps not have acted differently. The Brahmin is perhaps again repeating his earlier mentality. Though the Samiti is composed of the rest versus the Maratha of the Congress Party, the leadership of the Samiti is preponderantly Brahmin. Should the Samiti come to power, the wheel may perhaps again revolve to its earlier point of Brahmin versus the rest. In an economy where there is very little to go round, very little in authority and even less in money, the scramble is hard, farsight almost impossible and group cohesiveness an inescapable need. Is there then no way out? Is the wheel exactly identical?

When disputes repeat themselves without a move-on and with continuing stagnation, lethargy of the spirit is inevitable.

A likelier outcome, however, is an increasingly improving regrouping. Even while the present conflict is on and before it has been resolved, the Maratha of the Congress Party may be able to make political friends with some of the rest and the Brahmin of the Samiti may likewise acquire a genuine though limited kinship with the rest. Such a development will not, however, be as probable as the emergence of a new nucleus around which men of all castes may gather with the determination to end caste. The nucleus is perhaps already there. Its capacity to attract the people may take time to manifest itself. Infact, it may truly express itself only at the end of the present and the succeeding conflicts.

The exclusion of the high-caste from political power does not necessarily imply their exclusion from economic and other types of power. In the first place, such political exclusion has nowhere been total, not even in the South. The Brahmins have in recent years, as the sole representative of the high-caste, been increasingly eliminated from legislative and administrative power in Tamilnad. Even so, they still occupy a fantastically privileged position. Although only 4 per cent of the population, their share in the gazetted services of the administration must be around forty per cent. At one time, it was nearly seventy per cent. A second more remarkable development is the acquisition of economic power by the Tamil Brahmin. He has increasingly been buying up Mount Road from the retiring British. It would therefore be not correct to describe the high-castes in terms of any general decline or to bemoan their fate in any part of the country.

The Tamil situation is very intriguing. Elements of the non-Brahmin and the Dravida movement have influenced alike the Congress and the anti-Congress parties. Both the Dravida Kazhagams are openly Dravidian. So is the Congress Party in a concealed and somewhat milder way. All four elements of the Dravida movement, Brahmin *versus* non-Brahmin, Aryan *versus* Dravidian, North *versus* South and Hindi *versus* Tamil are pre-

sent in varying degree alike in the Congress and the anti-Congress movements. Not being obstructed by all-India considerations unlike the Congress Party, the anti-Congress Dravidian movements are fiercer in their opposition to the North, Hindi or the Brahmins as the situation demands.

But that is only the difference of degree. And, being the government party, the Congress Party is somewhat more effective, although its absorption of the Dravidian spirit is indeed more discriminating.

A confident forecast of the future is made somewhat difficult by the absence of clearly stated economic programmes. The anti-Congress Dravidian parties are even more fuzzy than the Congress Party in respect of economic programmes. Some of them have even allowed the more illusory North-South and similar prejudices to obscure and weaken the substantial caste issue. A happy outcome would have been if both the Dravidian streams, freed as they already have been of high-caste influence had increasingly rid themselves of geographical and linguistic prejudices and aimed single-mindedly at the destruction of caste and if one had tended to adopt conservative and capitalist and the other radical and socialist economic policies.

A likelier and harmful development would be the further accumulation of prejudices. If it accepted that India's economic condition including that of the South and Tamilnad is not likely to improve in the next decade and more, the stage is set for explosively irrational politics. The people may lend their ear more and more to cries of geographical and linguistic oppositions. Political parties would not be humane if they did not exploit such opportunities to rise to power. The likeliest development is somewhat more hopeful. It may take time to unfold itself fully. While the empty game of the prejudices is played out between the Congress and the anti-Congress parties, increasing sections of the people may begin to yearn for wholesome, positive and concrete programmes. Such a programme would have to base itself on socialist principles in the economic sphere and, in the

social sphere, on the total destruction of caste. It would therefore make use of the healthier aspect of the Dravidian spirit while it would try to absorb the individual Brahmin equally with the non-Brahmin into the coming social order. It would for some time to come have to aim at the destruction of high-caste privileges even through the award of preferential treatment to the backward castes.

Developments somewhat further North in the Andhra pradesh have been, in a sense, of greater interest. The Reddys of Andhra are a cross between the Kshatriyas and the Ahirs of North India, either of whom are almost absent from the Andhra scene, and have definitely become the most influential single caste of their State. They are the ruling caste of Andhra *par excellence* but they have been elastic enough not wholly to displease the Brahmins whom they ousted from political power and have been wise enough to share their power with smaller castes like the Velmas. They have, however, been unable to make friends with the Kammas, a caste almost wholly similar to the Kurmis of North India both in respect of their appellation and their sound cultivator status. Economically somewhat enabled and politically disabled, the Kammas of Andhra have been somewhat restless in the past decade. They have almost as an entire caste sought to revenge themselves on the Reddys through the instrument of the Communist Party. Having failed in that effort at least for the time being. they might make one more bid through the instrumentality of Prof. Ranga before they make their second bid through the Communist Party.

When would the Andhra political scene shift to the most numerous but the least influential castes? These are the Kapus, the Padmashalis, the Malas and Madigas, in fact, the combination which has from time to time been known as the Chetty Sangham. The Kapus are the most numerous cultivating caste, they are very poor occupancy tenants, and even poorer share croppers when they are not actually agricultural labourers. In order to put energy and activity into this mass of Kapus a political party would

have to arise that frees itself almost wholly from the strangle hold of the land-owning Reddy and the Kamma castes. Such a party would have to aim at the abolition of share cropping and, as a first step, perhaps at the award of one-third or even less to the land owner and the rest to the cultivator. The Communist Party has not been such a party and perhaps can never become such. It is far too much of a land owning party, not so much the big land owners as the smaller ones. It has indeed achieved remarkable success in acquiring for itself the loyalty of the agricultural labourers, who are by and large the Harijan castes. This phenemenon of Harijan loyalty to the Communist Party prevails over all of South India. Not unless a new nucleus emerges, which wages Kapu share croppers' struggles as much as the Harijan wage earners' struggles, would there be any chance of enlivening the large mass of Andhra population or of causing a shift in Harijan loyalty.

The rise of regional and caste parties like the Jharkhand and Ganatantra embodies exceptionally singular phenomena. The Jharkhand has almost never fought for the rights of Adivasis or forest-dwellers nor against the vicious laws or practices that oppress them. In fact, the Socialists and similar persons have fought for them in certain areas. And yet they vote for the Jharkhand, because it lives with them, eats and dances with them, sorrows and makes merry with them and is generally a part of them. Caste in this as in certain other cases, has driven a wedge between political and social kinship. Not unless the political and economic parties of national reach learn to live socially, in their births and wedding feasts and deaths, with different castes and tribes, will they be able to wrest from parties like the Jhakhand their undoubted dominion over select areas.

The Ganatantra tells a somewhat different story. It is not the story of a continuing darkness. It is the story of a light that has been blown out, of a relapse. The new tyrants of the Congress Party have proved so irksome and, in areas, so foul to the people that they are willing to opt for their old tyrants, the rajas

and the landlords. The Congress Party has truly broken its word to the people. The Orissa evidence is incontestable. It is difficult to predict the future. The people may well risk their fate with their former tyrants once again in sheer disgust. This and the ensuing disillusionment may well take another ten years to run out its course. Or some miracle of rapid development throughout the country may well compress the events of a decade into the compass of a year or two. In any event, the new nucleus of casteless loyalty, true to its pledged word and unsullied with the alliance of the old or new tyrants, must be there to bind the people, when they are ready.

How does this new nucleus differ from the Congress and Communist parties in respect of its attitude towards caste? Everybody is against caste these days. And yet caste flourishes, in some ways, as never before. Eminent sociologists like Max Weber have proved thoroughly wrong in their prognostications about this virus. They had thought that Europe-educated Indians bred to rational concepts and ways of life, would destroy caste on their return home. Little did they realise that these Europe-returned Indians would be drawn overwhelmingly from the ranks of the high-caste and would further reinforce the caste system with its exclusive marriages because of their education and high status. Speech against caste may well go with acts in furtherance of it.

Three distinct types of opposition to caste may be noted, one wordy, the second low level and mixed, and the third real. The wordy opposition is the loudest in respect of such generalised condemnation of caste as leaves the existing structure almost intact. It condemns the caste system as wholly evil, but would equally condemn those who resort to active steps to destroy the system. It sanctifies the principles of rising standards of living and of merit and equality of opportunity as solvents of caste. Raise everybody economically; give everybody an equal opportunity! So say these false advocates of destruction of caste, as though rising standards and opportunities would be restricted to

the low-caste. When everybody has an equal opportunity, castes with the five thousand year old traditions of liberal education would be on top. Only the exceptionally gifted from the lower-castes would be able to break through this tradition. This is what India's political parties, Congress, Communist and Praja Socialist, under Mr. Nehru's leadership have in mind. They would want men and women of exceptional abilty from the lower-castes to join their ranks. But they would want the structure as a whole to be kept intact. They are themselves drawn overwhelmingly from the higher-castes. They have no hesitation in denouncing their caste or the distinction of high and low-castes, so long as their social group based on traditions, ability and manners is left unaffected. If anybody qualifies in ability and manners from among the lower-castes, he is welcome. But how many would qualify! Very few. It would be the battle of five thousand years of oppressive training and tradition against an individual talent. Only the genius or the exceptionally able would win in this battle. To make this battle a somewhat equal encounter, unequal opportunities would have to be extended, to those who have so far been suppressed. But India's political parties of a surfacially European orientation under the leadership of that pseudo-European, Mr. Nehru, raise a gruesome shout against this doctrine of unequal opportunities as a blasphemy on their own doctrine of imported and vested interest socialism.

A vested interest socialism talks of political and economic revolution alone, meaning thereby the award of increased wages or bonus on the lowest level and the destruction of private property in factories and the like on the highest level. Even in the Europe of changing classes, such a revolution would keep intact the distinction between manual workers and those with the brain. In India of fixed castes, this distinction would spell ruin to the health of society. Workers with the brain are a fixed caste in Indian society; together with the soldier caste, they are the high-caste. Even after the completed economic and political revolution, they would continue to supply the managers of the

state and of industry. The mass of the people would be kept in a state of perpetual physical and mental lowliness, at least comparatively. But the position of the high-caste would then be justified on grounds of ability and in economic terms as it is now on grounds of birth or talent. That is why the intelligentsia of India which is overwhelmingly the high-caste, abhors all talk of a mental and social revolution of a radical change in respect of language or caste or the bases of thought. It talks generally and in principle against caste. In fact, it can be most vociferous in its theoretical condemnation of caste, so long as it can be allowed to be equally vociferous in raising the banner of merit and equal opportunity. What it loses in respect of caste by birth, it gains in respect of caste by merit. Its merit concerning speech, grammar, manners, capacity to adjust, routine efficiency is undisputed. Five thousand years have gone into the building of this undisputed merit. A true doctrine of equal opportunity would have to undo the work of five thousand years by giving preferential treatment to the lower-castes over a period of at least a few decades. India's political parties, Congress or Communist, are, under Mr. Nehru's leadership, thoroughly hostile to the award of preferential treatment on any large scale. They denounce it as a caste-motivated measure while they are themselvs viciously caste-ridden, perhaps unknowingly. They denounce caste by birth, but in ethroning the principle of merit, they keep secured their privileged positions.

On no account do the high-castes comprise more than one-fifth of India's population. But they keep to themselves almost four-fifths of the nation's leadership. In respect of the top leadership of the four main departments of national activity, business, army, high civil services and political parties, the high-castes easily comprise four-fifths. When we talk of the top leadership of political parties, we mean not the members of legislatures but the directing executives which choose them. When more than four-fifths of a nation's vital leadership is traditionally selected from among one-fifths of its population, a state of atrophy is bound to ensue. Four-fifths of its population sinks into

a state of listlessness and inefficiency. The nation is sick and continually on the point of death. To revitalise such a nation, a designed selection of leadership has to be made. At least half or sixty per cent of the nation's top leadership must be selected by design from among the lower-castes. This need not be done by law. It had better be done through a purposeful understanding. A start can be made through change in the nation's political leadership. That it can be done was recently demonstrated in the elections to the National Committee of the Socialist Party. True enough, the Party has had to suffer a grievous maligning at the hands of ignorant high-castes, both outside and inside its ranks. Time alone will show whether the maligning succeeds. Whatever happens on this occasion and in this Party, the attempt to revitalise the nation's leadership in terms of caste must be made again and again until it succeeds.

The overwhelming majority of the high-caste truly belong to the ranks of the lower-castes, but they are ignorant of this situation. It is this ignorance, which is preserving the most artificial social order the world has ever known. No more than half or a million men are the true high-caste. They are the men of money or talent or influence. They belong to the very special castes such as Bengali Baddis, Marwari Banias, Kashimiri Brahmins, which spew out the leaders of trade or the professions. On this pin-point dagger of a million truly high-caste persons rest the eight crores or so of false high-castes, on whom in turn are heaped the thirty crores or so of the lower-castes. The dagger has torn apart the vitals of the entire nation.

The wheel of caste revolves remorselessly. If it grinds out the hundreds of millions of the lower-castes, it also divides the high-caste into the true high-caste and the false high-caste. The true high-caste wears coat and tie or *sherwani* and *chudidars*. They are the Brahmins and Banias, Kshatriyas and Kayasthas of Delhi and the capital towns. To them are only illusorily related the hordes of Dvijas or the twice-born, who live in the villages or small towns. These false high-castes wear the dhoti or pyjama of the people. But they hug the illusion and discard the reality.

They are no longer men; they have become listless shadows of tradition. In actual fact even the true high-castes are pointless shadows of tradition in the midst of a mobile world where Khruschevs and Eisenhowers stride with the energy of somewhat activised nations. Mr. Nehru and India's political leaders may appear big to their own countrymen; to world history, they are the performing pygmies of weakened nations. Caste more than anything else causes debility to the nation.

How irrational caste is and how remorselessly its wheel grinds is obvious from the schism, not merely real, but also in nomenclature, within the Bania caste. The well-to-do Bania, the wholesaler, of ancient times became the Vaishya. It is difficult to say how exactly this happened. It may well be that the wholesaler or the well-to-do remained the Vaishya, while the rest became the Bania. The vast mass of the Bania caste, the Teli, the Jaiswal, the Pansari and the like, are treated by orthodoxy as Sudra. They are the retailers of ancient times, and, largely so, of today. The former wholesaler is the Dvija, the former retailer the Sudra. The wholesaler and the priest have hitherto always combined in Indian history. Their political, economic and social intimacy so picturesquely described as the Sethji-Bhatji combination by Maratha politics, has turned them into the twice-born and the high-caste *par excellence* of modern Hindu society. And this most obvious fraud continues, which shows up caste as nothing but the congealing of money and status.

this first wordy war on caste, led by the Dvija, is evenly matched by the second empty struggle against caste led by select Sudra groups. Among the Sudras, certain castes are numerically powerful, even overwhelming in some areas. The age of adult franchise has placed power in their hands. Some castes like the Reddys and Mudaliars of South India and the Marathas of the West have made use of it. They and, not the Dvija, are the political overlords of their areas, though, even here the high-caste has strengthened his economic grip and is making most celver and deceptive efforts to stage a political

comeback. This is possible chiefly because these are empty struggles against caste. They do not change the social order in the sense of making it more just, mobile or active. They do not give power to all the lower-castes, but only to the largest single section within them. They do not therefore destroy caste, but merely cause a shift in status and privileges. Some of the trappings of the high-caste belonging to the Brahmin or Vaishya are stripped off them and patched on to the Maratha or the Reddy. This solves no problem. Rather, it disgusts all the other lower-castes and enrages the high-caste. Caste, with all its debility and some more of its irritations, remains.

Taking the country as a whole, the Ahirs, variously known as Gvalas, Gopas, and the Chamars, also known as Mahars, are the two most numerous lower-castes, the former Sudra and the latter Harijan. They are the colossi of the Indian caste-system, like the Brahmin and Kshatriya among the Dvija. Ahirs, Chamars, Brahmins and Kshatriyas, each, comprise around 2 to 3 crores of people. Together they are roughly 10 to 12 crores of the Indian population. That still leaves a little less than three-fourths of the entire population outside their fold. Any struggles that leave unaltered their status or condition must necessarily be deemed empty. Shifts in the status and conditions of the four colossi may be of the greatest interest to them but are of little significance to society as a whole.

The Ahirs and Chamars of North India have made efforts, perhaps without much awareness, similar to those of the Reddys and the Marathas. They were bound to fail, first, because the Dvijas are far more numerous in the North and, second, because, they are not quite so numerically strong among the lower castes of the North. Nevertheless the effort continues on a somewhat lower key. Democracy is in many ways government by numbers. In a country where groups cohere through birth and long tradition, the most numerical groups tend to acquire political and economic privileges. Political parties run after them to select candidates from among them for elections to parliament and

assemblies. Additionally, their shout is the loudest for share in trade or the services. The result is most disastrous. The myriad lower-castes, each of whom is numerically weak, but who together form the bulk of the population, stagnate. A war on caste must necessarily mean an elevation of all, and not merely of any one large section. A sectional elevation changes some relationships within the caste system, but it leaves the basis of castes unaltered.

Sectional elevation is dangerous in yet another way. Those among the lower castes who rise to high positions tend to assimilate themselves to the existing high-castes. In this process, they inevitably appropriate the baser qualities of the high-caste. Everybody knows how the lower-castes, on their rise, tend to segregate their women, which again is a quality not of the top high-caste but of the medium high-caste. Also the lower-castes that rise begin to wear the sacred thread of the Dvija, which has so long been denied to them but which the true high-caste has begun discarding. All this has an additional result of perpetuating the distinction. Furthermore, such a rise does not cause a general ferment among the lower-castes. The risen are alienated from their own groups; instead of fermenting their own original lower groups they seek to become part of the higher-castes to whose positions they rise. This process of an extremely sectional and superficial rise gives birth to another misfortune. The lever to the rise is supplied not by the cultivation of good qualities or talent but by the arousing of bitter caste jealousies and the play of intrigues.

A somewhat peculiar situation obtains in an area like Bengal. It is commonly supposed that Bengal has no caste-politics. What is meant is that the vast bulk of the lower-castes are too unaware to speak, much less to shout. They are silent. The high-castes are very vocal. Furthermore, they are somewhat like the Europeans, for every single high-caste has tended, at least in the towns, to acquire an individualised personality. This silence of the lower-castes and the comparative modernization of the higher-castes has obscured the true position in Bengal, the most caste-

ridden portion of India. Someday, the silence will break. That will be the time when empty struggles against caste may repeat themselves. The Mahishyas, Sudra, and the Namsudras, Harijan, are the two most numerous lower-castes of Bengal. They might assert themselves, not with a view to destroy caste but in order to equal or rival the Brahmin and the Kayastha. The time to prevent such empty struggles is now. A deliberate policy of uplifting all the lower-castes and not merely the Namasudra or the Mahishya into positions of leadership must be followed.

This brings us to the third and true struggle against caste now on the agenda of India's history. This struggle aims to pitchfork the five downgraded groups of society, women, Sudras, Harijans, Muslims and Adivasis, into positions of leadership. irrespective of their merit as it stands today. This merit is at present necessarily low. The tests of merit are also such as to favour the high-caste. What long ages of history have done must be undone by a crusade. The inclusion of all women, including Dvija women, which is but right, into the downgraded groups of society raises their proportion to the entire population to 90%. This vast sea of submerged humanity, nine out of every ten of India's men and women, has drowsed into silence or, at best, some routine noises of seeming life. Economic and political uplift, by itself, may put some fat on their lean limbs. A restoration of self-respect through the abolition of caste, of course, when it goes side by side with economic uplift, can rouse them into the activity of full men and awakened peoples. Let it not be forgotten that the high-castes, Dvija, have also suffered grievously from this atrophy of the people, their education and culture hides, under the veneer of good speech and manners, the deadly poison of the lie and self-advancement through deceit. A crusade to uplift the downgraded groups would revive also the high-caste, would set righ frames and values which are all todav askew. This crusade must never be confused with the niggardly award of preferential positions to a few scores among the lower castes. This only irritates the high-caste. A howl goes up. It does not at all ferment the lower-castes. What matters if a

dozen or two of the lower-castes are added to the high-caste oligarchy of several thousands in any sphere of life? There is need to add them by the hundred and the thousand. That will turn into a crusade what is today only a vote-catching, quarrel-making and jealousy-inspring device. The fact that an entrant or two from the lower-castes into the higher reaches receive sharp notice, while dozens of simultaneous entrants from the higher-castes are accepted in the usual course, indicates what a hot crusade would be necessary. It must be emphasised again and again that hundreds of lower-castes, who might otherwise stay unnoticed, must received greater attention in a deliberate policy than the two colossi who would attract notice anyway.

This policy of uplift of downgraded castes and groups is capable of yielding much poison. Infact, care may only mitigate some of the worst aspects of the poison; it cannot be totally eliminated. A first poison may come out of its immediate effects on men's minds; it may speedily antagonise the Dvija without as speedily influencing the Sudras. With his undoubted alertness to developments and his capacity to mislead, the Dvija may succeed in heaping direct or indirect discredit on the practitioners of this policy long before the Sudra wakes up to it. Secondly, the colossi among the lower-castes like the Chamars and Ahirs may want to appropriate the fruits of this policy without sharing them with the myriad other low-castes, with the result that the Brahmin and Chamar change places but caste remains intact. Thirdly, the policy may be misused by selfish men among the lower-castes for individual advancement, who may additionally use weapons of intrigue and caste jealousies. This would rend society further apart and subject it to grosser selfishness without bringing it any benefits of weakening and expansion. Fourthly, every single case of election or selection between a Sudra and Dvija may become the occasion for acrimonious exchanges. The baser elements among the downgraded castes would use it as a constant weapon. In their over-weening desire to eliminate the particular Dvija against whom they are ranged, they would in total seek to oust all Dvijas or to fill the air with darker suspi-

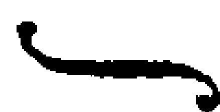
cions when they fail. Fifthly, economic and political issues may be obscured or relegated into the background. Reactionaries among the lower-castes may misuse the anti-caste policy to serve their own ends. For instance, the Backward Castes Commission Report, by which the lower-castes are swearing, has side-stepped the great issues that confront the people such as abolition of land tax on uneconomic holdings and the impositions of a ceiling on all incomes. Its concrete recommendations are just two in number, one good and the other bad. It has recommended reservation in services for the backward castes and the reservation could justifiably be more disproportionate than the Commission has wished. But it has erred in making a similar recommendation for education. Let the backward castes ask for two or three shifts in schools and colleges, if necessary, but let them never ask for the exclusion of any child of India from the portals of an educational institution.

Such is the poison that this policy may bring forth. Continual awareness of this poison may check it in great measure. But the fear of the poison should not blind us to the miraculous power of this policy to create and cure. India will know the most invigorating revolution of her history. The people will have become alive as never before. She may also have indicated in the process a lesson or two to mankind. Karl Marx tried to destroy class, without being aware of its amazing capacity to change itself into caste, not necessarily the ironbound caste of India but immobile class anyway. For the first time, an experiment shall have been made in the simultaneous destruction of class and caste.

The young high-caste must now rise to his full measure. Instead of seeing in this policy an attack on his interest, he should view it for its capacity to renew the people. After all among the very few relationships of marriage between high and low castes, those between Dvija and Harijan can be named but not so between Sudra and Harijan. The young high-caste must decide to turn himself into manure for the lower-castes, so that the people

may for once flower into their full glory. If human nature were capable of infinite sacrifice, we would have the high-caste become advisers, while the executives are all low-caste. If this is not possible everywhere, let it be so in as many places as possible. With faith in the great crucible of the human race and equal faith in the vigour of all the Indian people, let the high-caste choose to mingle tradition with mass. Simultaneously, a great burden rests on the youth of the lower castes. Not the aping of the high-caste in all its traditions and manners, not dislike of manual labour, not individual self-advancement, not bitter jealousy, but the staffing of the nation's leadership as though it were some sacral work should now be the supreme concern of women, Sudras, Harijans, Muslims, and Adivasis.

—1958, *June.*



A NOTE ON INDIA'S RULING CLASSES

Every country possesses a ruling class, but no country nor age has ever known a ruling class so immobile and so firmly entrenched in positions of power as that in India. Three characteristics distinguish India's ruling classes; 1. high caste, 2. English education, 3. wealth. The combination of any two of these three factors makes a person belong to the ruling classes. One might have thought that wealth and education would be economic and cultural-social factors and therefore highly mobile phenomena. But that is not so. The presence of the third factor of high-caste freezes the whole situation into an almost impossible immobility, for over 90 percent of country's ruling classes belong to the high-castes, and most of them possess both of the other characteristics of wealth and English education, while some possess only one or the other.

How many persons do these ruling classes or castes roughly comprise? There are the highly material and statistical tests of the motor car and the English daily. Roughly 3 lakhs of people own motor cars. That would bring the ruling classes to an approximate total of 15 lakhs. Over 8 lakh copies of English dailies are sold in the country, and, on a rough average of four readers for each copy, a total over 3 million rulers may be calculated for the whole country. This would be a very rough approximation, for it would include some people, who buy their English newspapers for purposes of distinction and are not really able to understand it as also some others who possess no other characteristic of the ruling class. Then, there is the statistics of people who own radio sets. Barring community sets, privately owned radio sets would number around 7 to 8 lakhs, which would bring the total of the ruling class to around 40 lakhs of people. This would, of

course, include many who could, by no stretch of imagination, be called men of superior status or wealthy, but it would exclude many who otherwise belong to the ruling classes. Income-tax statistics are only illustrative, but they would seem to corroborate this figure of 4 million people.

I should imagine that well over 90 percent of these 40 lakhs of people, that is, well over 3.6 million people, belong to the higher-castes. There cannot be a complete statistical proof of this contention. Such sample statistics as one collects from random villages or city wards prove the contention.

I suspect that statistics of consumption of modern ware would somewhat substantiate these figures. There again, one has to think of tooth brushes and tooth pastes and cold creams and not so much of ordinary soaps for these latter have come into mass use at least in urban areas. It may be that the numbers of those who consume modern ware run into a crore and more, for, a large number of such users are not really habitual users and are, what we might call, city living imitators of the rich among the poor. nor do they take real pleasure in the use of these articles. I have often wondered why wares of modern consumption from motor cars to tooth pastes should be advertised through the medium of the English language. The explanation is simple. They are articles of distinction and are used by a small number of people who distinguish themselves from the mass of the people through the use of a distinct speech.

There must be something fantastic about 40 lakhs of people ruling so immobilely, so pitilessly and so completely, over 40 crores of people. How do they manage it? A known recipe of feudal, aristocratic or caste rule is the success with which a ruling class is able to distinguish itself from its own people, so that the masses themselves recognise the distinction as just and fair. This distinction pertains to speech, dress and styles of housing. Throughout the last 1,500 years and perhaps even more, the ruling classes of India have spoken a speech distinct from that of the people, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian or English. They have

also sported different styles of dress. Modern India has even sought to put the government's seal on a court dress, which is the sherwani and the chudidars and, of course, the coat and tie. The ruling class modern courtier of India who wears a distinctive court dress and mouths a distinctive foreign speech has naturally also been able to usurp and monopolise modern styles of housing. Rule over the body is made easy through successful rule over the mind, through instilling a feeling of hopeless and resigned inferiority among the ruled, the people. Distinct styles of speech, dress and housing intimidate the people and they consider themselves inferior, and those others with these distinctions as superior. The element of caste makes the whole situation almost hopelessly irredeemable. Forty centuries and more have been steadily nurturing the ruling classes by birth in this country. Certain skills of government and trade have become so specialised as to reside in certain specific castes. To these age-old traditional, routine and recognised specializations are added the equally recognised distinctions of speech and dress and there you have the irredeemable situation of India, where 40 lakhs are alive in a selfish, elegant but barren way while 40 crores are just helpless loam and putty.

Not all the high-castes belong to the ruling classes. The high-castes of India would perhaps come up to a total of 9 to 10 crores, but only 3 to 4 million of these belong to the ruling classes. One sees such glaring examples. The Kadua Chaubeys are each one of them the ruling class of the country, while Mitha Chaubeys are the pandas and pilgrim-guides of Mathura. The Kashmiri Pandit who came away over 50 years ago from Kashmir to settle down in the rest of India is each one a member of the ruling class, while the Pandits who stayed back belong almost to the disabled and dispossessed classes. The Parsi is another example. The Banias including the Marwaris belong generally to the dispossessed mass, while the Marwari Seth of Sekhavati almost fills up the ranks of the industrial and wealthy classes. The wheels of caste have been grinding without stop. That has created a fantastic situation of specialization. This specialization is

recognised and accepted by the mass of the people and also by law. Distinctive styles of speech and dress are its most dangerous instruments of power. It may be of interest to note that the total numbers of those who can use the English language with a minimum amount of skill would come to about 3 to 4 million people, which again corroborates the figure arrived at on the basis of other criteria.

A most highly disturbing factor has emerged. Each five-year plan seems to be providing a fresh stream of 5 lakhs to a million people to the country's ruling classes. I suspect that well over 80 percent of this come from the higher-castes. Successive five-year plans will leave the mass of the people in their present plight, as the first two plans have amply demonstrated. The fresh stream makes the enslavement of the people by the ruling classes easy and smooth through uplift of a limited section. This limited section which is lifted up acts both as a hopeless temptation and a clever propagandist. It creates the illusion of progress. It helps secure to the ruling classes the approval of the mass.

Perhaps the most disastrous feature of the whole situation is the uplift of a limited section of backward and low-castes into the ruling classes of the country. The Mudaliars, Nairs, Marathas and Reddys have never belonged to the backward castes of the country, except scripturally, but the recent rise of some of them to political, educational or economic authority has disclosed certain disturbing features. So has the rise of individual Chamars, Momins, Ahirs, Kammas, Malas, Namasudras and the like. These gentlemen and gentle women who rise from their low and backward status into positions of authority adopt the modes of distinction even more greedily than the acknowledged high-castes.

All political parties of India are led by the ruling castes. No matter how much they may strife with one and another and whatever irreconcilably conflicting principles they may display, they present one solid phalanx of distinguished people against the mass and are tied to one another through these hundreds of webs of distinction into a single fraternity. I do not think that these

political parties can renew the country. They will fight to the last ditch to justify their distinctions as achievements of modernity and would also generally succeed in drugging the people.

Some political parties belong declaredly to the dispossessed and the backward classes and they are the Jharkhand of Bihar and Orissa, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam of Tamilnad, the Shetkari Kamgars of Maharashtra, the Republicans largely of Maharashtra. The trouble with these parties is that they have no programmes either of work or fight for four years nine months and are content to acquire such little parliamentary recognition as they possess through an electoral caste appeal of three months. Furthermore, the largest party of the dispossessed and disabled classes, from the view point of numbers, is still the Congress Party. Any party that bases itself exclusively on the caste appeal of the backward castes must necessarily maintain bonds, open or secret, with the Congress Party or at least sections of it.

Let us contemplate a situation in which these regional parties of the backward castes and others combine to create a single exclusive party of dispossessed and disabled humanity in the country. In the first place, that would be an almost impossible undertaking, for in the moment that it begins to succeed, the high-castes will siphon off its leading elements into its own ranks not necessarily openly. In the second place, it might lead to a civil strife without end and solution. Thirdly, it might create a situation in which one group of what are today backward castes replaces the group of the current ruling castes. All these possibilities almost shut the door on the country's renewal.

The only commendable experiment in this direction is the recent effort of the Socialist Party. It has openly and frankly adopted a scheme of preferential opportunities to the mass of the people. It is fighting for the abolition of distinctions between the classes and the masses, such distinctions as are based not alone on wealth but also on social and cultural elements. But it is up against difficulties. It has so far been unable to recruit a sufficiently large number of the high-castes into a genuine army

of crusaders against caste and for preferential opportunities to the backward castes. It has also been unable to enthuse the mass of the backward castes into a continuing programme of work and fight.

The mass of the people seem to have lost the ability to rebel. The ruling castes seem to have lost the ability to renew the country, if it be at the expense of traditional roles and status. The situation not only seems to be ripe for an invasion but also appears to call for it. A capitalist invader cannot renew the country, for his principle of free enterprise would easily coincide with the traditional principles of caste. The communist invader may theoretically be contemplated as being able to do what the native communist is so patently incapable of doing. The native communist is a part of the frozen ruling castes of the country. The foreign invading communist may unfreeze the existing situation and shake the masses into a rebellious clamour and activity. I shudder at such a contemplation, for something tells me that this may happen and also that it may kill the soul of our people and with that, at least partly, also their body.

There seems to be no alternative except to go on with the experiment of the Socialist Party. We may of course have to devise some mechanisms other than those so far provided. It may give constitutional sanction to its scheme of preferential opportunities to the extent of 60 to 70% of leadership posts in politics, government services, the military and trade and industry, to women, Sudra, Harijan, Adivasis and the backward castes of religious minorities. It may start to do so with its own organization as a matter of constitutional obligation. Would it be worthwhile excluding the parties of backward castes from the jurisdiction of its general policy relating to united fronts? Conversations, symposia and debates in which not only the learned but more so individuals belonging to undistinguished Indian humanity and political parties of the backward castes participate, may also be considered.

I should like to conclude with a special feature that obtains within the ranks of the high-castes. Some of these high-castes are traditionally bureaucratic, while some others are equally traditionally industrial and trading. This physical split between the bureaucratic high-caste and the trading high-caste of the country sometimes creates an illusion of class conflicts and generally a situation of inefficiency and meaningless clashes. The public sector and the private sector coincide with the age-old phenomena of castes. Their superficial conflict befools the people but nothing changes. The trading high-castes have to acquire yet another skill of corrupting the bureaucratic high-castes.

A total rebellion is the only way out.

—1959, *October.*

ASSOCIATION FOR STUDY AND DESTRUCTION OF CASTE

[*This declaration on caste may serve as groundwork for the formation of appropriate associations all over the country. A more elaborate constitution is likely to obstruct rather than further these revolutionary objectives.*]

Believing that the system of castes has put four-fifths of the people of India out of the scope of public life and through tradition, institution and thinking, freed them of all responsibility for the nation's fate;

That it has more than anything else caused the frequent enslavement of the country, for not the disunity among high-caste leaders, but the disinterestedness of the low-caste people has caused India to succumb to successive foreign conquests;

That it has caused the unusually low productivity of the country's agriculture and industry by making manual labour shunned as nowhere else in the world, and exploitation or beggary so honourable as nowhere;

That it has congealed the people through an inbred specialization of skills, habits and qualities, so that learning and life are disjointed, so that the stupor of the lower-castes and the mean cleverness of the higher-caste oft strut as spirituality and a stable order, that it destroys all sense of discrimination between right and wrong by overlaying it with the boundaries of caste, but also,

That the system of castes is the world's greatest scheme of assurance and solidarity on occasions of birth, marriage, death, festivity and also unemployment and other distress and therefore,

it enters into all situations and calculations as nothing else in the country;

That its destruction is the supreme need of public life and at the same time its most difficult endeavour;

We form ourselves into the "Association for the study and destruction of Caste," whose activities shall cover all spheres particularly the educational, the religious, the social and the political;

Which shall through studies, debates, seminars and all other types of meetings and discussions lay bare such elements of India's culture, thought and life, as have produced stagnation and caste;

Which shall purify religion and its practices of the taints of caste, which shall, while believing that inter-marrying alone ultimately dissolves castes and propagating for it through scientific studies and the creative arts, concentrate on the immediately attainable aims of common and festival meals;

Which shall demand the securing of sixty per cent of leadership posts in government, political parties, business and the armed services, by law or by convention, to the backward castes and group namely women, Sudras, Harijans, Adivasis and the lower-castes among religious minorities taking care to see that the one or two numerically powerful backward groups do not usurp the rights of the immensely more massive but splintered totality of the lower-castes, and also ensuring that every branch and a committee of the association is built on this principle;

Which will not act electorally but may, through appropriate decision and if the requisite strength is reached, affiliate itself with an existing political party of its choice or turn itself into one;

Whose membership will consist of all those who sign this declaration, without any further requirements of discipline, and every one of whose members shall be entitled to be present as a delegate to every meeting or conference;

Whose expenses, if any, will be met by collection or donations;

Whose conferences and committees will necessarily begin at the primary, constituency, and city levels, and will proceed upwards only after one third at least of the base is organised;

Whose officers will not be officers of any other organization;

May the association command the loyal toil of all castes, high and low, for the destruction of the system of caste and invigoration of our people as never before in their history.

LIST OF SUBJECTS FOR DEBATE

[*These debates may be organised by the association for study and destruction of caste. In the absence of a live association of this type, a more general debating organisation may find the list interesting or useful. In any event, it would be of profit to hold these debates in different parts of a town whether in a hall or open-air.*]

1. In the opinion of this house, preferential opportunities in the leadership of political parties, national economy and government service should be given to suppressed and retarded groups like woman, Sudra, Harijan, Adivasi and backward castes among religious minorities.

2. In the opinion of this house, inter-caste or inter-group marriage should be an indispensable condition of government service.

3. In the opinion of this house, if woman's place is in the kitchen, man's place is in the nursery.

4. In the opinion of this house, intellectual loyalty and the assent of conscience should be deemed an adequate ground like birth or domecile for the award of citizenship, and, in any event, the right to travel, the right to live and the right to die on any

bit of mother earth should be considered an inalienable human right subject to no national laws.

5. In the opinion of this house, admission to all classes in colleges and universities of the country should be open to everybody who has passed the earlier class.

6. In the opinion of this house, students who pass at all subjects except compulsory English should be declared to have passed their examination.

7. In the opinion of this house, no land revenue nor tax should be levied on profitless agriculture or uneconomic holdings.

8. In the opinion of this house, taxes and profits on an essential commodity of manufacture should be kept at a level so that the sale price does not exceed one and a half times its cost of production.

9. In the opinion of this house, the lowest and highest income or expenditure in the country must keep within the limits of 1 to 10 and no unreasonable allowance or provisions should be allowed to defeat this policy of achieving maximum equality attainable in the present context.

10. In the opinion of this house, maximum fluctuation in the same locality in the price of any food crop between two harvests should not exceed one anna a seer.

11. In the opinion of this house, the governments of the country are making unnecessary and dangerous incursions into the liberties and privacies of the citizens and are becoming used to such luxury and waste as to damage the spiritual and moral fibre of individual and public life.

12. In the opinion of this house, such styles of dress as woman's blouse are unhealthy and are meant not to cover but to excite, and man's tie and chudidars are part of the attempt to perpetuate the feudal order by irrational revivals of the past or an equally irrational imitation of foreign modes.

13. In the opinion of this house, disinterestedness of the people and not disunity among the leaders was the prime cause of India's frequent succumbing to foreign invasions.

14. In the opinion of this house, Draupadi and not Savitri is the representative woman of India.

15. In the opinion of this house, the colour of the skin is no criterion of beauty.

16. In the opinion of this house, immediate abolition of the public use of English is a necessary condition for democracy in India, and for industtrial, scientific and intellectual advancement.

17. In the opinion of this house, caste struggle is as necessary as class struggle for achievement of equality, although these struggles must be based on non-violence.

18. In the opinion of this house, ballot and bullet should no longer be regarded as the only alternatives and, while the ballot has to be given permanent place in governance, the true alternatives should be civil disobedience and bullet.

19. In the opinion of this house, the history and the description of the Indian people has been greatly distorted by the classification of Aryan, Dravidian, and Mangolian.

20. In the opinion of this house, the manifold causes, of provincialism, linguism, religious fanaticism and casteism are primarily encouraged by the middle class, high-caste and English educated ruling classes of India for their selfish ends.

21. In the opinion of this house, the co-existence of public and private sectors in Indian economy reinforces the evils of caste and corrupts public life and therefore nationalization must not be gradual or piecemeal but wholesale.

22. In the opinion of this house, the government of the people for the people by the people must be sustained by the

government of the commune for the commune by the commune on the one hand, and of the mankind for the mankind by the mankind on the other hand.

—1960, *May.*

CASTE AND SHRINKAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

If the democratic candidate Mr. Kennedy wins the Presidential election in America, Mr. Khruschev will have been the most important voter and Mr. Nehru the second most important voter at the elections. The melo-drama at the United Nations which otherwise looks so pointless and endless acquires meaning only in the context that the Russians wanted to influence the outcome of the American Presidential elections. I do not know whether the Indian prime minister blundered into this drama or played it knowingly. In any case, these dramas become costly to a nation without food and without the bomb and nine tenth of whose population is more animal than man.

The degradation of women, Adivasis, Sudras, Harijans and backward classes among Muslims and others must be traced to the caste system. Then emerges a new sociological law that shrinkage and contraction of opportunity and ability is a necessary accompaniment of caste. Whatever bureaucratic ability there is in the country is to be found among Brahmins and Kayasthas, and business ability among Vaisyas, and 90% of the country's population and its natural abilities in these spheres have become atrophied and paralysed. The process of shrinking of ability and opportunity once started went on indefinitely with the result that certain previleged subcastes among these Brahmins or Kayasthas acquired more previleges while the vast majority was continually deprived and becoming less able. Caste means depriving the people of their abilities and that is the most important reason why the Indian people are so backward and so often have been enslaved. In order once again to revive the abilities of the Indian people the remedy of special and preferential opportunities is the only presciption so that 90% of this deppressed

population should have 60% of all the high opportunities in the country such as gazetted services or leadership posts. As long as ability and qualification is a test for opportunity, the Indian people will remain deprived of their abilities and reservation would stay on peper. 60% of all opportunities in the land should be given to backward sections of the people irrespective of their ability in the hope that this reverse process of expanding opportunities will destroy the caste system and revive the abilities of the people.

I regret that members of the Socialist Party are not giving sufficient importance to debating societies, thought sessions, and similar other pursuits of the mind. I call for the formation of debating societies which would invite learned persons as well as illiterate persons to take part in debates and which will hold one debate every fortnight or every month in different parts of a town.

The civil disobedience is still continuing and has achieved some signal success and Rajnarain, Talib and Prabhunarayan and hundreds of others are still in jail. This fighting spirit must be supplemented by knowledge and information so that the satyagrahi is also able to understand and argue, which unfortunately he does not do as well today as he fights against injustice.

—1960, *October* 12.

JAT VINASH CONFERENCE

The Socialist Party has nothing whatever to do with the Ujjain Angrezi Hatao conference of January or the Chitrakut Ramayan Mela of February or the Patna End Caste conference of March. Individual Socialists will undoubtedly work actively for these conferences and I hope that individual Congressmen or Communists or non-partymen in agreement with their objectives will do so equally actively.

—1960, *November* 11.

ROOTS OF THE CASTE PROBLEM

A Harijan and Adivasi legislators meeting is being organised by Congressmen in Hyderabad.

Almost everybody who desires to be modern wants to destroy caste system but almost nobody is setting about it properly.

The roots of the caste problem must be uncovered, but that will cause great pain. Two outstanding facts must ever be kept in forefront, one that 90% of the population belongs to the backward sector, women, Harijans, Adivasis, Sudras and backward castes among Muslims and other religious minorities. Two, that over 90% of the country's industry, government, military, free professions and almost all public existence is run and controlled and staffed, at least in its higher personnel, by high-caste men who form less than 10% of the population. Long disuse of the mind over centuries by most of the Indian people has paralysed the country and also paralysed them. They can no longer run the race with the high-caste man, not even if they are properly educated, for a certain selection and cultural mutation seems to have taken place, not unless they are given preferential opportunities. This depressed 90% must be assured 60% of all opportunities in the country except in such specialised skills as surgery, until they are able to run the race equally. I am proposing this measure not alone in the interest of India's total national capacity to protect her freedom but to grow. This is therefore the supreme test. Would the proposed Harijan asd Adivasi legislators' assembly demands for themselves and also for women, Sudras and backward Muslims and Christians a 60% reservation in all opportunities of the country not as a measure of selfish advancement but as a measure of national security and advancement.

Even among the high-caste male a steady contraction of opportunities is taking place. That is the law of the caste system. When the caste system obtains, a continuous contraction and shrinkage of abilities and opportunities into smaller and yet smaller groups is inevitable.

The proposed meeting should address itself also to the religious, social and economic offensives on the caste system. Among the social offensives is mass interdining particularly in the villages at the one end and inter-marriage at the other. While intermarriage cannot be made an obligatory aim of the movement as interdining should be, the government would be perfectly within its rights to enlist its servants from among those who have intermarried. On the economic front, agressive offensive must be opened for the minimum facilities to hutment dwellers. I may be permitted to mention that Jaglal Choudhary is probably the most outstanding and intelligent Harijan legislator of the Congress Party and his voice should be heard. The average run of Harijan and Adivasi legislator is out for personal service in the sense of scholarships or jobs which naturally falls very much short of changing society. There is more need to change laws and rules and practices. I should also like to warn the Sudras, Harijans and Adivasis against their hope that when the present prime minister leaves the field, one of their ranks will take his place. This will not happen and even if it did, it might mean a few more services and scholarships to the depressed sections but nothing more.

—1961, *February* 3.

BACKWARD CLASSES AND TAX ON 6½ ACRES

The policies of the government have not benefited the backward castes. You must have heard recently that the Socialist Party is growing in eastern U.P. About 15,000 members of the PSP have joined the Socialist Party. Some such news items get printed in the newspapers.

Many Congressmen have also been joining the Socialist Party. I had been to Saran district a couple of months back. About 2,500 or 3,000 Congressmen and Congress supporters from Siwan Tahsil of that district have joined the Socialist Party led by Dr. Lakshman Rawat. That Dr. Rawat joined the Socialist Party is a great thing. When they were in the Congress they talked a different language. They talked of narrow and meaningless selfish interest of the backward castes. Then they talked out of hate and jealousy. These people are now changed men. I shall give you examples from two of his speeches. He said that he was not a fit person to preside over the day's public meeting. He was then presiding over my public meeting at Chapra. He further said that he was trying to make use of the same principle that I had put forward, that is the man who may not deserve should be given a high position so that he might be made fit to deserve. Give 60% of high positions to those of the low-castes. I hear that he had said in a recent meeting that he preferred the Brahmin and Rajput of the Socialist Party to the backward caste members of other parties, because it was the principle that mattered. Though they are born in high-caste they would do more for the backward castes than a Sudra or a Harijan leader of the Congress.

I am glad Lakshman Rawat and his friends were now talking this language, because Congress leaders like Sri Jagajivan Ram or Daroga Raiji are not able to do anything but they are used as baits. The upper-caste leaders of the Congress use Sri Jagajivan Ram as a bait to catch 4 crores Chamars in the Congress net, while the Congress government has not done them any good, at best 10 or 15 thousands of the Harijans would have been given scholarships, employment, Taccavi loans etc. Similarly, Birchandji is a bait for the Kurmis and Daroga Raiji is for Ahirs. 3 crores of Ahirs and 4 crores of Chamars and all backward castes can really benefit only when, 1. landholdings below 6½ acres are exempt from tax; 2. 60% of all jobs and positions are reserved for their population and preferrential opportunities given; 3. the public use of English is done away frothwith; 4. the loot of prices is put a stop to; and 5. the principle that all manufactured goods are sold at 1½ times its manufactured price is accepted. The Socialist Party has accepted these as fundamentals.

—1961, *November* 16; *Daltongunj speech summary.*

ANTI-CASTE

I have never been anti-Brahmin and I have almost always been anti-caste. But I made a slight mistake in imagining that the anti-Brahminism of the South could be transformed into anti-caste. The ruling elements among Reddys, Mudaliars and Nairs have in the past 50 years been anti-Brahmin only to come abreast of the Brahmins and now that they have done so, at least politically, they appear to be sated. They have given up their ideology of reservations and are now as much against the so-called communal government order as were once the Brahmins. My hope that the South would become the leader of all India in the fight against caste is eclipsed at least for the time being. Unless the Kapus, Idavas, Mala-Madigas, Ansars, Adivasis, Avasa Christians and such like and of course the women rise and become effective electorally there is no hope. The Reddys, Nairs and Mudaliars are at not all backward castes, and they have never been backward. They are the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Kayasthas, of the North, with this difference that religion did not sanctify these castes. A new ideology must be adopted, which is that abilities stem from opportunity. To 90 per cent of India's population, the Sudra, Harijan, backward castes of religious minorities, Adivasis, and all women belong, 60 per cent of all higher opportunities, in the country should be given. The principle ought to apply to the highest of comperative examinations and I entirely reject the prime minister's arguments in this respect although they are decietfully based on merit and ability.

I should like to ask a question as to why almost all top executives in Delhi, secretary to the Lok Sabha, secretary-general to the external affairs ministry, India's Ambassador to U.S.A., and in a year or two the commander-in-chief—are all Kashmiri Pandits. Lest this should be misconstrued as a personal virus

against the prime minister, let it be known that the Bania chief minister of Uttar Pradesh at the present moment has filled up almost all top posts with his caste same as the Kayastha chief minister did with his caste earlier. There seems to be a law operating in our country that a man will draw to himself men of his own caste presumably because their fortunes are tied up. A deliberate attempt must be made to destroy this dangerous web that is immasculating this nation.

To stop talking of caste is to shut ones eyes to the most important single reality of the Indian situation. One does not end caste merely by wishing it away. A 5,000 year long selection of abilities has been taking place. Certain castes have become especially gifted. Thus, for instance, the Marwari Bania is on top with regard to industry and finance and the Saraswat Brahmin in respect of intellectual pursuits. It is absurd to talk about competing with these castes unless others are given preferential opportunities and previleges. The narrowing selection of abilities must now be broadened over the whole, and that can only be done if for two or three or four decades backward castes and groups are given preferential opportunities. I must here make distinction between opportunities for employment and those for education. No one should be turned away from the portals of an educational institution because of his caste. Society on the other hand would be perfectly justified in turning those away from its employment whom it has so far previleged. Let them earn their livelihood elsewhere. Society is required alone to equip them with the necessary educational ability.

—1961, *December.*

99 PERCENT DOWN TRODDEN PEOPLE

The huge disparity between the economic wealth and resources of the nations of the world and the fatal centralization of these previleges in the hands of a few big nations of the world was one of the biggest hinderances in the way of the progress of the mankind. In a few decades the common men of the best military equipped nations would compel their leaders to discard the use and the production of the dangerous weapons of the war because of their utter uselessness owing to their being means of total destruction of the world. The common men of India should also develop the great power of keeping their government in their control. Change of the government could save it from decay, corruption and degeneration. The one percent English-oriented rich, high-caste and previleged persons are keeping the 99 percent of the population of India in perpetual bondage. The other parties, including the Congress, Jana Sangh, Communist and Praja Socialist parties, are all invariably dominated by this high-class of one per cent people. I appeal to the people to develop the Socialist Party as the party of the 99 per cent down-trodden people. The Socialist Party stood for immediate removal of the English language from public use, reasonable proportion between the agricultural and industrial prices, removal of land tax on holdings below 6½ acres, 1 to 10 ratio between incomes and expenses, guarantee of 60 per cent position for the backward people.

The people of Gwalior would write a bright page in the history of the country by initiating a big social and economic revolution by making Mrs. Sukho, a sweeper woman, successful in the election of the House of the People against the Maharani of former Gwalior state, who is fighting election on Congress ticket. This election contest at Gwalior is more important than

my own contest with Mr. Nehru in Phulpur (Allahabad) constituency of Lok Sabha.

—1962, *January* 26; *Gwalior speech summary.*

APPENDIX

I. HARIJAN TEMPLE ENTRY

"The National Committee has noted with profound regret and anguish the fact that even upto this day in Uttar Pradesh, on account of untouchability, the Harijans have not been accorded the right on par with high-caste Hindus to enter the temples for worship. The movement at Banaras to get this right conceded to Harijans has been so successful that the U. P. government was forced to bring in a new legislation to cover up its orthodox leanings. The Vishvanath Temple movement has assumed a national significance in as much as deep indications are implied in the action of the government.

Although the Untouchability (Offences) Act passed by the parliament was there, still in support of the argument favouring the passage of another legislation by the state assembly in order to give the Harijans the right of entry into temples throughout the state, the Uttar Pradesh government assured Mr. Raj Narain in writing that untouchability in Banaras would now be abolished because "the law will be effective after the Governor puts his signature." That means a law remains ineffective even after the signature of the President. In their efforts to achieve a socialistic pattern of society, if the practice of treating laws as effective and ineffective continues unchecked between a higher and a lower government, people will cease to have confidence in the sanctity of law and the responsibility for the consequent chaos will lie squarely with the government.

In the above case, the government has violated its own laws, and by using the hateful methods of arrests, beatings and lathi

charge against those who came forward to defend their lawful rights, has exhibited its dictatorial attitude and has also absued its power by preventing them from exercising their right of worship.

The chief minister of U. P. in a letter dated 14th September has also written, "I hope that I will succeed in enforcing the law in a near future, but in such matter it is not possible to fix a particular date." After this assurance of the government it seems possible that the discrimination between Harijan and other Hindus will end in temples at Banaras as elsewhere. Under the circumstances the National Committee is of the opinion that the proposed convention of October 1st, 1956 to be followed by a struggle should be suspended for the time being in order to offer the government a chance to fulfil its promises in the near future.

The National Committee of the Socialist Party congratulates those citizens of U. P. and particularly the Socialists, who by courting imprisonment and receiving beatings inspired the government to take this step towards ending untouchability. At the same time it expects that the Harijans themselves will also move speedily towards the elimination of the feeling of high and low prevailing among them."

—1956, *September* 16-19; *Nagpur.*

II. THE CALCUTTA CLUB LTD.

Extracts from the constitution and the annual report of the Calcutta Club Ltd:

I. Memorandum and Articles of Association including general by-laws.

1. The name of the company shall be the Calcutta club limited.

4. The Viceroy and Governor-General, Governors, the Commander-in Chief in India, the ruling princes of India, the

Lieutenant Governors and Chief Commissioners, Chief Justices, the Lord Bishop of Calcutta and the members of the Executive Councils of the Governor-General, Governors and Lieutenant Governors may be invited by the committee to become members without ballot, but on the same condition as permanent members in other respects.

20. The committee are empowered to invite visitors of distinction, the personal staff of H.E. the Viceroy and H.E. the Commander-in-Chief and members of cricket or other sporting teams visiting Calcutta to become honorary members of the club during their stay here. This courtesy is to be extended free of entrance fee or subscription, and can be repeated to the same person more than once.

36. The management of the affairs and concerns of the club shall be vested in a committee which shall consist of a president and twenty two members (of whom one half shall be Europeans and one half Indians) and of whom ordinarily two (one European and one Indian) shall be the honorary secretaries, if there is an honorary secretary.

II. Annual Report and accounts of the Calcutta Club Ltd., as on 31st December 1957.

THE CALCUTTA CLUB LTD.

Patron

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President, Republic of India.

Profit and Loss Account.

This account shows a surplus of Rs. 26,338 as against Rs. 42.083 in the previous year after allowing Rs. 81,510 for depreciation as against Rs. 46,946 for depreciation and Rs. 20,996 written off against the cost of squash tennis court last year.

Entrance fees for the year amounted to Rs. 73,000 as against Rs. 69,500 in 1956.

Subscriptions have increased to Rs. 2,65,345 from Rs. 2,36,042 received in 1956.

The wines and cigars account shows a surplus of Rs. 1,03,746 as against Rs. 80,728 in the previous year.

III. TOWARDS DESTRUCTION OF CASTE

The Third National Conference of the Socialist Party views the caste system in India as the largest single cause of the present material and spiritual degeneration of the country. It has weakened all, the Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. The mind, specially in its unconscious layers, is so firmly cast on the caste mould that people invariably equate the prosperity of their own caste with the country's progress. Such persons simply do not realise what harm they are inflicting on the nation by their opinions and actions.

Abolition of caste is the declared policy of almost all political parties in the country. But they have not thought about the implicit consequences of such declaration, nor have they attempted to integrate this declaration with their other policies. Neither have they any concrete programme to implement it.

The communist theory of dictatorship of the proletariat, and the weapon of the 'vanguard class' to attain it, conspicuously correspond with the Dvija theory of caste system. Consequently, high-caste communists will always remain ahead of the low-caste communists, barring of course one genius in a crore.

Like their other policies, the caste policy of the Congress and Praja Socialist parties is double-faced. They intend to destroy the caste system. At the same time they also intend to reconstruct the country on the basis of equal opportunity to all according to ability. In a country where for thousands of years caste *samskars*, traditions and privileges have been established, the theory of equal opportunity according to ability will increase, rather than decrease, the existing inequalities. In matters of

trade, government services of superior grade, political and military leadership, the Dvijas have acquired hereditary abilities. That is why the Congress and Praja Socialist way will not lead to the destruction of castes.

This conference of the Socialist Party declares, as the logical consequence of the policy of destruction of caste, that until the system of caste is totally destroyed, the reconstruction of India should have, instead of ability, preferential opportunity as its basis. Women, Harijans, Sudras, depressed Muslims and Christians, and Adivasis constitute more than 85% of our total population. But in the four decisive fields, namely, politics, army, trade, and high government jobs, they are less than 10%. Until this imbalance is set right, neither the caste system will vanish, nor will new life be generated in the country. Therefore, the Socialist Party is determined that these backward castes should get the opportunity for leadership. They should get at least sixty per cent of the key posts in public life. This change should be effected through legal protection, where necessary, but generally through changing the mental attitude. After availing this preferential opportunity for some years, traditional ability and *samskaras* will be formed among the backward classes too, and India will be strong in all its parts.

As the matter of legal protection to backward castes with regard to government services and education is being talked about, the conference declares without reservation that if backward castes get 60 to 70 per cent reservation in government services, it will be beneficial for the country; but in the field of education, no child be permitted to enjoy any protection against another. All should get equal opportunity in education. Discrimination should be exercised only in the case of government services. Educated Dvijas should try their luck in other fields.

The government will have to make provisions for adequate education among the backward classes. Facilities for higher education shall have to be increased.

regard to food, although time is yet not ripe to chalk out a programme of making intercaste marriages obligatory. Literature, drama, fairs, and games may serve, among the youth, as media of cultural intercourse and diffusion. At present, while merit is the exclusive inheritance of the upper castes, the lower-castes alone possess spontaneous living, and, as a result, both talent and vitality are on the wane in our national life.

Some are inclined to think that it is no use waging war against the caste system directly; destruction of the capitalist system through class struggle will automatically result in the extinction of castes. In the first place, in a country cursed with the caste system, it is not possible to end feudal and capitalist inequalities through class struggle alone. Moreover, why are those, who view class struggle as inevitable for the establishment of a classless society, so much averse towards caste struggle for the creation of a casteless society? The Socialist Party does not intend to give currency to class and caste struggles of old, dogmatic types. It aims at destroying caste and class through non-violent and peaceful means of propaganda, organization and struggle.

This conference is aware that while propagating and implementing its caste policy, the Socialist Party will be much misunderstood. Some will, instinctively but nevertheless mistakenly, regard this policy as anti-Dvija. The millstones of caste grind the higher-caste after finishing the lower ones, and divides them into two—the high-caste Dvijas whose income is Rs. 50 or more a day, who put on feudal dresses like Sherwani and Chudidar pyjama, and whose children, from the very start, speak in the feudal language of 'daddy' and 'mummy;' and the low-caste Dvijas who are ordinary workers and speak and use peoples' language and dress. It has been a disease with these low-caste Dvijas to look towards their superior counterparts. The wheel of caste will be broken when the low-caste Dvijas begin to look towards the backward castes, the Sudras, Harijans, women, Muslims and Adivasis. Then the complete paralysis of 85% and the

semi-paralysis of 14% of our population will be together healed. Exploitation will come to an end and India will be strong in all its parts.

—1959, *April; Banaras.*

IV. CASTE RIOTS IN TAMILNAD

"The National Committee views the riots in Ramnad and Madurai districts of Tamilnad with deep concern. They have shown the existence of such bitter hatred and underground violence in the country that castes within the Hindu group are capable of combating one another with the frenzy of religious passion. The Committee also notes that these riots were preceded by a prolonged stage of increasing bitterness between conflicting castes consequent upon their exploitation for electioneering purposes by certain political parties.

After the actual outbreak of these riots, the government in its customary fashion had no means other than police force to quell them. No police lives were lost, while the people died by the score. In the past ten years of free India over a thousand peoples' lives have been lost in various police firings, but not more than 3 or 4 policemen have been killed by violent crowds. The National Committee is definitely of the opinion that such a situation is expressive of the unhealthy relationship that exists between the people and the police and the establishment of healthy relationship would be of advantage to both and to the entire state of law and order.

The National Committee has noted with regret that leaders of opinion and of political parties in the country intervene in a crisis only after it has exploded and make appeals for peace after the first frenzy of violence is over. In most cases normalcy would be restored even without such appeals as the frenzy exhausts itself. The task of political parties and of leaders of opinion in the country is therefore to intervene in a situation before it breaks out into a crisis, which would mean that they

should take positive steps towards change in thought and behaviour of the people, particularly in relation to the caste system, instead of waiting on and reacting on events as they take place from time to time. The National Committee directs all units of the Socialist Party to the supreme task of destruction of the caste system in the country rather than of mere reforms in it."

—1959, *September* 23-29; *Hyderabad.*

V. END CASTE CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions passed at the All-India End Caste Conference, Patna, March 31—April 2, 1961:

1. *Mixed Dinners*

This Conference appeals to the people of India and its units to organize mixed dinner parties everywhere in the country and especially in the villages.

2. *Marriage*

The Conference is of the opinion that the caste system can be destroyed only when intercaste marriages become common. But due to rigidity in social and individual thinking this has become almost impossible of achievement. To propagate these ideas discussions, plays, and fairs should be organized so that, through people understanding each other's problems, the country may grow stronger and happier. The idea that skin colour has anything to do with beautry must be fought tooth and nail. The conference appeals to the people and especially its units to give full support to intercaste marriages wherever they take place.

The Conference is of the opinion that the government has every right to make intercaste marriage laws for government employees.

The Conference demands that government jobs should be given only to those who marry out of their caste. Here out--of-

caste marriage will mean marriage between Dvijas and Sudras or Syeds and Julahas, and not between different subcastes among the high-castes.

3. *Distribution of land*

As most of the landless labourers are lower-castes, their sufferings are both physical and mental. The Conference demands distribution of land to the landless. The landless should be helped either through a land army or government agencies to build houses and cultivate land properly.

4. *Women's Conference*

Women's conferences pass resolutions on problems of marriage, distribution of property, etc., so as to press for women's rights and to bring about greater equality between the sexes. While supporting these resolutions, the conference would like to raise the questions of supply of fresh water and building lavatories for women. Drinking water should be supplied everywhere in towns and villages. If this is not possible then taps should be built for groups of houses. This can be achieved within a period of two five-year plans at a cost of 2,000 crores of rupees, usually spent by the state governments in a period of six months. The conference advises the village and district panchayats to build such lavatories as will not require cleaning by labour.

5. *Titles should be abolished*

The End Caste Conference is of the opinion that titles affixed to names should be so evolved as not to indicate the caste of a man. At the same time, the conference wishes to warn that the movement for abolition of titles has been started by the high-castes, so that along with titles indicating caste, the principle of preferential opportunities may also be destroyed and the dominance of upper-castes be perpetuated by establishing the principle of equal merit between Dvija and Sudra.

6. *Preferential opportunities for backward castes*

It is an inherent law of the caste system that it reduces and diminishes strength and ability in the country. The caste system creates deep-seated traditional habits. Particular qualities are increasingly confined in particular groups. As a result there is a terrible drying up of strength and ability in the country. This caste system, which is rotting India alone in the whole world, must be destroyed.

To change the traditional qualities of people who have been oppressed for thousands of years, they will have to be given special opportunities. They will have to be given support to bring them in line with others, so that the race may be equal. Those who talk of equality while retaining castes are either scoundrals or fools. There can be equality among castes only when castes are abolished, and castes can be abolished only when backward castes are given special and preferential opportunities. Whether able or not, women, Sudras, Harijans, backward castes, Adivasis, and Muslims like weavers will have to be given 60 per cent reservation.

Religious, social, and economic programmes will have to be carried out along with a political programme. Hundreds of mixed dinners will have to be made a daily and festive occurrence. Landless lower-castes will have to be assured of land for cultivation and housing by a redivision of land or through a land army. Religion will also have to be cleared of its rubbish about castes.

VI. 60% CANDIDATES FROM BACKWARD CASTES

"The fifth national conference of the Socialist Party expresses its unshakable faith in the end caste policy adopted at its Banaras conference.

This conference firmly believes that for the establishment of classless and casteless society the submerged people will have to

be given preference. This policy has created some ill feeling in some parts and among some individuals. Some tensions have been created in the organization. Some persons, all the time, put forward some excuses to escape from this policy. But this conference is of the opinion that it should not perturb, for it is the outcome of that policy.

This conference firmly believes that all the members of the Party will fully endeavour to make a success of this policy, so that a basically new India emerges and which will work actively for the betterment of the world. Also this conference warns that non-implementation of this policy or implementing it haltingly and half-heartedly will harm the country and the Party.

This conference resolves that in accordance with the caste-policy 60% of its candidates for the coming general elections should be from amongst women, Sudras, Harijans, Adivasis and backward castes of minority communities."

–1961, *April; Hajipur.*

VII. SAMAJAVADI YUVAJANA SABHA RESOLUTIONS

1. *Inter-marriage*

Resolved that intermarriage in the sense of marriage between an upper-caste person and another of the backward caste be made a priority qualification for government service.

2. *Phoney integration*

Resolved that, as India's successive enslavements in recent history were due not to disunity among kings or leaders but to people's disinterest, what is needed are measures that awaken people's interest and participation and not those of a phoney national integration of the upper classes. To awaken such interest, it should be the aim of national policy to abridge income

gaps between the rich and the poor of all castes as well as to provide preferential opportunities for backward castes.

—1962, *October* 2-5; *Hyderabad.*

VIII. A NOTE ON CASTE

Women, Sudras, Harijans, Adivasis and the low castes among religious minorities number around 38 crores. High castes number around 8 to 9 crores. As a matter of policy women should not be included in high castes. High caste males number 4½ to 5 crores. Therefore, in India's population there are 4½ to 5 crores males of high caste, and 38 crores belong to low caste.

2. Some change in this calculation has become necessary Nairs of Kerala, Mudaliars of Tamilnad, Reddys of Andhra are low castes only in the sense of sacred thread, but for all practical purposes they are equal to Kshatriya-Vaisya of the north, perhaps even higher. Marathas of Maharashtra, Lingayats or Vakkalingayats of Karnataka, not all but some special classes, should be considered likewise. Therefore, in a way, high caste males number 6 to 6½ crores.

3. Low castes of the north are mistakenly thinking that their people have won in the south and now as soon as Mr. Nehru leaves the scene, not only in the north but in the whole of India low castes will win and one from among them will become the prime minister. In the first place, there would be no change by merely making a low caste person, the prime minister, but by change in policy. In the second place, Nair-Reddy and Maratha etc., in whom low castes in the north take pride because of their self interests and organizations, have now gone closer to Dvijas in their ways of thinking. They will be assisting the Dvija more, for they have started talking in terms of equal opportunity and have given up their 50 year long struggle for preferential opportunity, although the fight still lingers in one form or another—be it anti-Brahmin, or anti-north or anti-Hindi.

4. Among high castes only 50 lakhs are rich—rich in the sense that their monthly income or expenses amount to a thousand rupees or more. This is a broad estimate giving an idea of the condition in India. It is not correct to the pie. This has been calculated on the basis of the figures of motor cars, telephones, income-tax payers and such similar sample statistics.

5. 5 crores of the males of high castes are poor and 50 lakhs are rich. The remaining 37 to 38 crores, including all women, belong to low castes. These three categories must be kept in mind: 1. Rich males of high castes: 2. Poor males of high castes and 3. Low castes.

6. Some statistics of the poverty in India must be kept in mind. The average earning of an Indian is Rs. 400/- a year, while a Russian's or an American's is from Rs. 8,000/- to Rs. 14,000/-. The yearly growth of per capita national income in Russia and America is Rs. 250/- whereas in India it is Rs. 5/- only. The most hungry and deseased country in the world is ours.

7. In this bog of great poverty inequality is also great. In almost all the white countries, whether capitalist or communist, the inequality in incomes generally ranges from 5 to 10 times. Russia and America are almost alike in this respect. In India the inequality is of fabulous magnitude. A primary teacher in America gets Rs. 60 to 70 a day and a vice-chancellor Rs. 200/- and the other teachers range within the limit of three times. In India this difference is 80 to 100 times. An American scavenger gets Rs. 40 a day, a farm labourer Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 whereas their counterparts in India get Rs. 2 and 0.50 nP. a day respectively. But the Indian prime minister spends Rs. 25 to 30 thousand a day whereas the personal expenditure of an American president is Rs. 5,000/-. The difference between a rich and a poor man in India is so great that the like of it has never been nor is anywhere in the world. Such difference is perhaps not possible anywhere. The caste system and the economic inequality, complimentary to each other, strengthen each other.

8. Ninety percent of India's population is dead and 9 percent is halfdead; only 1 percent lead a strangely distorted life. It seems this has been so during the last 1,500 years. That is why India is the most humiliated country in the world. Those who ascribe slavery to disunity know nothing of history, politics and sociology. India has been succumbing to slavery, mainly because of the disinterestedness of the people and the biggest cause of this has been the caste system. Associated with this is the economic difference between a big and a small man.

9. In the present also the five year plans and other economic projects are useless because 1 percent big people eat away one third of the national output. As a result, the burden on small people and the tax-load do not show any prospect of relief and the required capital for increased production is scarce.

10. The caste system has been continually attacked for thousands of years without success. This gives rise to a belief that it is now a permanent feature. The attack on caste has till now been from one and a half sides—from the religious side and partly from social movements. Now simultaneously with the economic approach, the attack has to be launched from the side of marriage relationship also, may it be verbal only, so that the social attack may be perfect. Adult franchise and the principle of preferential opportunity constitute the political approach while increased wages, abolition of taxes on uneconomic holdings, distribution of land, etc. would be the economic measures for abolishing caste. Such an all-round attack alone would render the destruction of caste possible at last.

11. However, doubt persists, for the caste system and economic inequality have crippled the Indian people from the point of view of revolution during the last 1,000 and 1,500 years. Indian people have never risen in revolt against any tyrant or tyranny. Revolution is not possible where there is complete equality or gross inequality. In the former, revolution is not necessary, in the latter, where it is necessary, there is no power to revolt.

12. This circle can only be broken by political and other forms of ties between the 90 percent low castes and the 9 percent poor males of high castes. But the *job is difficult*. The 9 percent high caste poor males are liberal in mind but handicapped economically and so they become mostly unpaid servants of the big. Another difficulty in tying them with the low castes is that the low castes, as they gain in strength, view these poor males of high castes with doubt and rivalry. As a result the supremacy of the big remains intact and caste continues to live.

13. The Socialist Party is the first political party in India, which has understood the caste system and has launched a policy of abolition of castes. Two difficulties have come up even at this preliminary stage. First, the low castes are not motivated into life and action until they are aroused to hate, revenge or some such ill feelings. People in political parties divide themselves into caste groups through self-seeking. Where there is a clash of personal interests the high castes and the low castes start gathering in their own groups. There is nothing more dangerous than this. But there is no remedy to it except political training. Still one more thing has to be kept in view. When envy or vengeance becomes the tool of an individual or a group, he or it becomes incapable of blossoming out the merit and the power inherent in them.

14. Some among the low castes such as Ahirs, Julahas and Chamars are numerically large. Other low castes, such as Mali, Teli, Kahar etc., are small when taken separately but taken together their number is much greater. As a result when low castes rise and the caste system is attacked, the major beneficiaries are the numerically big castes. To some extent this is inevitable, but one has to be alert so that the other low castes also may be invigorated and leaders drawn from their rank.

15. Another malady has come to light. Even those who work sincerely for the destruction of caste are not constantly on the look out for leaders from among women, Harijans, Sudras and Adivasis. Just at the time of elections they catch

hold of some one and make him contest. Like a mother the high caste leaders must make a constant effort to bring up leaders from among the backward groups. But the mother-child relationship is spontaneous. Much depends on to what extent such relationship between the high caste leaders and the backward masses can be deliberately fostered.

16. But this need not be a forced process altogether. For the wheel of caste is grinding both ways. After grinding the low castes it grinds the poor males of the high castes—mostly simultaneously and almost uniformly. Secondly, where there is caste, opportunity and ability tend to warp and fewer and fewer people will qualify to ability. As a consequence the nation will become incapatuated.